

# Fertility of American Women: June 2002

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## Population Characteristics

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### INTRODUCTION

This report profiles current fertility patterns of American women and is based on data collected in the June 2002 supplement to the Current Population Survey (CPS).<sup>1</sup> Unlike annual fertility statistics compiled from birth certificates by the National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS), CPS data are collected from two questions asked of women 15 to 44 years old: (1) the number of children they have ever had, and (2) the date of birth of their last child. The report provides current estimates of fertility and out-of-wedlock childbearing, highlighting differences among women by race, ethnicity, and nativity status. Historical data from previous surveys are also used in this report to show the fluctuations since 1976 in the labor force participation of women with infants (children under 1 year of age), and to illustrate how women completing their childbearing today differ from women a generation earlier, whose principal childbearing years occurred during the Baby Boom (1946 to 1964).

Data from NCHS indicate that fertility rates have fluctuated sharply since the peak of the Baby Boom in the late 1950s, when women were having children at a rate of more than 3.5 births per woman. By the mid-1970s, the total fertility rate fell by one-half to about 1.8 births per

<sup>1</sup> The data in this report are from the Fertility Supplement to the June 2002 Current Population Survey. The population represented (the population universe) is the female civilian noninstitutionalized population, 15 to 44 years old, of the United States.

woman.<sup>2</sup> During the past decade, fertility rates have fluctuated between 2.0 and 2.1 births per woman, a rate below the level required for the natural replacement of the population (about 2.1 births per woman).<sup>3</sup>

### CURRENT FERTILITY

#### Overall patterns of fertility

Table 1 shows fertility levels for women in June 2002 by age, race, and Hispanic origin.<sup>4</sup> Of the 61.4 million women who were 15 to 44 years old in June 2002, 3.8 million gave birth in the preceding 12 months; 1.4 million were first births.<sup>5</sup> This produced an estimated fertility rate of 61 births per 1,000 women 15 to 44 years old and a corresponding first-birth rate of 23 births per 1,000 women. In

<sup>2</sup> The total fertility rate for a given year is a hypothetical estimate of completed fertility. It indicates how many births a woman would have by the end of her reproductive life if, for all of her childbearing years, she was to experience the age-specific birth rates for that given year.

<sup>3</sup> The level required for the natural replacement of the population is the average number of children a woman must have to replace herself with a female living to the average age of childbearing. Taking into account that slightly more boy than girl babies are born and that not all children survive to the childbearing ages, this level is about 2.1 births per woman.

<sup>4</sup> The estimates in this report are based on responses from a sample of the population. As with all surveys, estimates may vary from the actual (population) values because of sampling variation or other factors. All comparisons made in this report have undergone statistical testing and are significant at the 90-percent confidence level unless otherwise noted.

<sup>5</sup> Preliminary vital statistics estimates for the calendar year 2002 indicate that there were about 4 million births, of which 1.6 million were first births (Brady E. Hamilton, et al., "Births: Preliminary Data for 2002." *National Vital Statistics Report*, Vol. 51, No. 11. National Center for Health Statistics, Hyattsville, MD, 2003, Table 2).

## Current Population Reports

By  
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Demographic Programs

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Table 1.  
**Fertility Indicators for Women 15 to 44 Years Old by Age, Race, and Hispanic Origin:  
 June 2002**

(Numbers in thousands)

Characteristic	Number of women	Percent childless	Women who had a child in the last year				Children ever born per 1,000 women
			Number with a birth	Births per 1,000 women		First births per 1,000 women	
				Rate	90-percent confidence interval		
<b>AGE</b>							
<b>Total.....</b>	<b>61,361</b>	<b>43.5</b>	<b>3,766</b>	<b>61.4</b>	<b>59.4 - 63.4</b>	<b>23.1</b>	<b>1,211</b>
15 to 19 years .....	9,809	91.2	549	55.9	50.9 - 60.9	27.7	140
20 to 24 years .....	9,683	67.0	872	90.0	83.0 - 97.0	45.3	525
25 to 29 years .....	9,221	45.2	897	97.2	90.2 - 104.2	33.2	1,050
30 to 34 years .....	10,284	27.6	859	83.6	77.6 - 89.6	26.4	1,543
35 to 39 years .....	10,803	20.2	452	41.9	36.9 - 46.9	7.9	1,849
40 to 44 years .....	11,561	17.9	137	11.9	9.9 - 13.9	3.6	1,930
<b>RACE AND ETHNICITY</b>							
<b>White</b>							
<b>Total.....</b>	<b>48,481</b>	<b>43.9</b>	<b>2,958</b>	<b>61.0</b>	<b>58.0 - 64.0</b>	<b>22.9</b>	<b>1,196</b>
15 to 19 years .....	7,699	91.9	394	51.1	45.1 - 57.1	24.7	129
20 to 24 years .....	7,604	69.5	631	83.0	76.0 - 90.0	42.8	473
25 to 29 years .....	7,151	46.6	723	101.1	93.1 - 109.1	34.7	1,018
30 to 34 years .....	8,057	27.2	717	88.9	81.7 - 95.1	29.5	1,530
35 to 39 years .....	8,658	20.2	374	43.2	38.2 - 48.2	7.9	1,842
40 to 44 years .....	9,313	17.9	120	12.8	9.8 - 15.8	4.2	1,917
<b>White, Non-Hispanic</b>							
<b>Total.....</b>	<b>40,017</b>	<b>45.6</b>	<b>2,262</b>	<b>56.5</b>	<b>53.5 - 59.5</b>	<b>21.3</b>	<b>1,130</b>
15 to 19 years .....	6,296	93.0	289	45.8	39.8 - 51.8	21.7	116
20 to 24 years .....	6,138	73.2	437	71.1	63.1 - 79.1	37.4	406
25 to 29 years .....	5,599	51.1	555	99.2	90.2 - 108.2	37.4	881
30 to 34 years .....	6,544	29.9	576	88.0	80.0 - 96.0	28.7	1,413
35 to 39 years .....	7,281	21.5	300	41.2	36.2 - 46.2	7.7	1,755
40 to 44 years .....	8,160	18.5	106	13.0	10.0 - 16.0	4.2	1,842
<b>Black</b>							
<b>Total.....</b>	<b>8,846</b>	<b>39.0</b>	<b>571</b>	<b>64.6</b>	<b>58.6 - 70.6</b>	<b>22.3</b>	<b>1,354</b>
15 to 19 years .....	1,535	86.7	125	81.4	65.4 - 97.4	38.0	214
20 to 24 years .....	1,497	51.1	193	128.9	108.9 - 148.9	61.2	828
25 to 29 years .....	1,351	31.6	98	72.7	56.7 - 88.7	18.6	1,392
30 to 34 years .....	1,440	23.9	95	66.1	51.1 - 81.1	10.1	1,790
35 to 39 years .....	1,506	19.7	52	34.2	23.2 - 45.2	5.0	1,942
40 to 44 years .....	1,518	19.2	8	5.6	1.6 - 9.6	-	1,991
<b>Asian and Pacific Islander</b>							
<b>Total.....</b>	<b>3,267</b>	<b>50.8</b>	<b>181</b>	<b>55.4</b>	<b>46.4 - 64.4</b>	<b>27.3</b>	<b>994</b>
15 to 19 years .....	447	94.2	23	51.1	27.1 - 75.1	34.9	86
20 to 24 years .....	481	81.0	22	45.1	23.1 - 67.1	29.5	297
25 to 29 years .....	608	60.7	66	109.1	79.1 - 139.1	45.2	631
30 to 34 years .....	632	41.2	40	62.5	40.5 - 84.5	31.3	1,124
35 to 39 years .....	530	23.3	21	40.6	20.6 - 60.6	17.7	1,605
40 to 44 years .....	568	16.8	9	15.7	3.7 - 27.7	4.8	1,974
<b>Hispanic (of any race)</b>							
<b>Total.....</b>	<b>9,141</b>	<b>35.8</b>	<b>750</b>	<b>82.0</b>	<b>73.0 - 91.0</b>	<b>30.4</b>	<b>1,511</b>
15 to 19 years .....	1,517	87.8	105	69.3	48.3 - 90.3	35.4	172
20 to 24 years .....	1,574	52.9	226	143.7	115.7 - 171.7	70.8	768
25 to 29 years .....	1,682	29.5	176	104.6	80.6 - 128.6	25.8	1,522
30 to 34 years .....	1,620	15.6	152	93.7	70.7 - 116.7	32.6	2,043
35 to 39 years .....	1,481	13.4	77	52.1	34.1 - 70.1	8.1	2,287
40 to 44 years .....	1,266	13.1	14	10.9	1.9 - 19.9	3.8	2,437

- Represents zero or rounds to zero.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, June 2002.

Table 2.  
**Children Ever Born Per 1,000 Women 40 to 44 Years Old: Selected Years, 1976 to 2002**

(Numbers in thousands)

Year	Number of women	Children ever born per 1,000 women	Percent distribution of women by number of children ever born						
			Total	None	1 child	2 children	3 children	4 children	5 or more children
1976.....	5,684	3,091	100.0	10.2	9.6	21.7	22.7	15.8	20.1
1980.....	5,983	2,988	100.0	10.1	9.6	24.6	22.6	15.5	17.6
1985.....	7,226	2,447	100.0	11.4	12.6	32.9	23.1	10.9	9.1
1990.....	8,905	2,045	100.0	16.0	16.9	35.0	19.4	8.0	4.8
1995.....	10,244	1,961	100.0	17.5	17.6	35.2	18.5	7.4	3.9
1998.....	11,113	1,877	100.0	19.0	17.3	35.8	18.2	6.1	3.5
2000.....	11,447	1,913	100.0	19.0	16.4	35.0	19.1	7.2	3.3
2002.....	11,561	1,930	100.0	17.9	17.4	35.4	18.9	6.8	3.6

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, selected years, June 1976 to June 2002.

this report, the fertility rate is defined as the number of women who reported having a child in the 12-month period ending in June 2002 per 1,000 women in the specified age and/or characteristic group at the time of the survey.

Overall, 44 percent of women in the childbearing ages were childless in 2002. Table 2 shows that among women 40 to 44 years old (who were nearing the completion of their childbearing years), 18 percent were childless, almost twice as high as among women who were the same age in 1976 (10 percent). Women 40 to 44 years old in 2002 will probably end their childbearing years with an average of 1.9 children, more than one child fewer than the average for women in this same age group in 1976 (3.1 children).

This shift in average number of children born by age 44 reflects the decline in families with four or more children, from 36 percent to 10 percent, and the corresponding increase in families with one or two children from 31 percent to 53 percent.

### Fertility differences by race and ethnicity

Hispanic women had the highest fertility rate in 2002 among all race and origin groups shown in Table 1 (82 births per 1,000 women 15 to 44 years old).<sup>6</sup> Among Hispanic women, 750,000 gave birth in the year prior to the survey, representing 20 percent of all births in 2002. The proportion of all women 15 to 44 years old who were Hispanic was 15 percent in 2002. The fertility rate of non-Hispanic White women (57 births per 1,000 women) was considerably lower than that of Hispanic women.

Among women 40 to 44 years old in 2002, only Hispanic women, with an average of 2.4 births, exceeded the level required for the natural replacement of the population (about 2.1 births per woman). White women and non-Hispanic White women had fertility levels significantly below the replacement

<sup>6</sup> People of Hispanic origin may be of any race. Data for the American Indian and Alaska Native population are not shown in this report because of their small sample size in the CPS. Based on the population of women 15 to 44 years old surveyed in the June 2002 CPS, 4.7 percent of the Black population and 2.6 percent of the Asian and Pacific Islander population were also of Hispanic origin.

level, averaging 1.9 and 1.8 births per woman, respectively. Corresponding to their relatively high level of completed fertility, only 13 percent of Hispanic women 40 to 44 years old were childless, compared with 19 percent of non-Hispanic White women.

### Fertility differences by nativity status

Table 3 shows that 8.9 million foreign-born women 15 to 44 years old lived in the United States in June 2002, representing 15 percent of women in the childbearing ages.<sup>7</sup> In the year prior to the survey, 637,000 foreign-born women gave birth, resulting in a fertility rate of 71 births per 1,000 women. Forty-one percent of births to foreign-born women were first births. The fertility rate for native women was considerably lower, at 60 births per 1,000 women, although the percentage of first births (37 percent) was not significantly different from that of foreign-born women.

<sup>7</sup> In this report, "native" is used to designate people born in the United States, Puerto Rico, the outlying areas or territories of the United States, or abroad to at least one U.S.-citizen parent. "Foreign born" refers to all other people. The Current Population Survey sample does not include Puerto Rico or other outlying areas.

Table 3.  
**Fertility Indicators for Women 15 to 44 Years Old by Selected Characteristics: June 2002**

(Numbers in thousands)

Characteristic	Number of women	Percent childless	Women who had a child in the last year			Children ever born per 1,000 women
			Number	Births per 1,000 women	First births per 1,000 women	
<b>Total.....</b>	<b>61,361</b>	<b>43.5</b>	<b>3,766</b>	<b>61.4</b>	<b>23.1</b>	<b>1,211</b>
<b>MARITAL STATUS</b>						
Currently married.....	30,275	18.7	2,505	82.8	28.6	1,792
Married - husband present.....	27,828	18.5	2,382	85.6	29.6	1,784
Married - husband absent <sup>1</sup> .....	2,446	21.1	124	50.5	17.0	1,878
Divorced or widowed.....	5,303	21.1	143	26.9	6.6	1,724
Never married.....	25,782	77.2	1,118	43.3	19.9	423
<b>EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT</b>						
Not a high school graduate.....	13,096	58.8	812	62.0	20.1	1,043
High school graduate.....	16,644	30.7	1,005	60.4	22.8	1,478
College, 1 or more years.....	31,621	43.9	1,949	61.6	24.4	1,140
No degree.....	12,451	45.9	750	60.2	24.0	1,124
Associate degree.....	5,113	33.0	221	43.2	15.5	1,374
Bachelor's degree.....	10,592	46.6	683	64.5	25.1	1,059
Graduate or professional degree.....	3,465	44.6	294	84.9	36.8	1,100
<b>LABOR FORCE STATUS</b>						
In labor force.....	43,360	44.0	2,056	47.4	19.5	1,165
Employed.....	40,150	43.2	1,867	46.5	18.4	1,178
Unemployed.....	3,210	52.8	189	58.8	32.9	1,011
Not in labor force.....	18,001	42.4	1,710	95.0	31.6	1,320
<b>ANNUAL FAMILY INCOME</b>						
Under \$10,000.....	4,203	40.0	355	84.5	30.5	1,449
\$10,000 to \$19,999.....	5,760	39.9	472	81.9	34.8	1,334
\$20,000 to \$24,999.....	3,348	38.2	215	64.3	21.9	1,338
\$25,000 to \$29,999.....	3,464	41.9	194	56.1	15.9	1,221
\$30,000 to \$34,999.....	3,612	43.7	264	73.2	23.1	1,206
\$35,000 to \$49,999.....	8,477	43.0	457	53.9	19.0	1,204
\$50,000 to \$74,999.....	10,613	43.6	554	52.2	23.3	1,176
\$75,000 and over.....	13,771	47.2	826	60.0	21.4	1,098
Not ascertained.....	8,114	44.7	428	52.8	21.1	1,188
<b>REGION OF RESIDENCE</b>						
Northeast.....	11,616	46.1	694	59.7	21.2	1,148
Midwest.....	14,041	43.8	780	55.6	21.6	1,212
South.....	21,680	40.9	1,453	67.0	25.9	1,234
West.....	14,024	45.1	838	59.8	21.7	1,226
<b>METROPOLITAN RESIDENCE</b>						
Metropolitan.....	50,755	44.8	3,032	59.7	22.6	1,180
In central cities.....	18,804	46.4	1,163	61.8	22.9	1,167
Outside central cities.....	31,950	43.8	1,869	58.5	22.5	1,188
Nonmetropolitan.....	10,606	37.3	734	69.2	25.1	1,357
<b>NATIVITY AND HISPANIC ORIGIN</b>						
Native.....	52,428	44.8	3,129	59.7	22.0	1,169
Hispanic (of any race).....	4,739	43.7	371	78.3	28.5	1,285
Not Hispanic.....	47,689	45.0	2,758	57.8	21.3	1,157
White, not Hispanic.....	38,485	45.7	2,170	56.4	21.1	1,127
Foreign born.....	8,933	35.6	637	71.3	29.3	1,456
Hispanic (of any race).....	4,402	27.4	379	86.0	32.5	1,755
Not Hispanic.....	4,531	43.5	258	56.9	26.2	1,166
White, not Hispanic.....	1,533	42.4	92	59.7	26.8	1,195

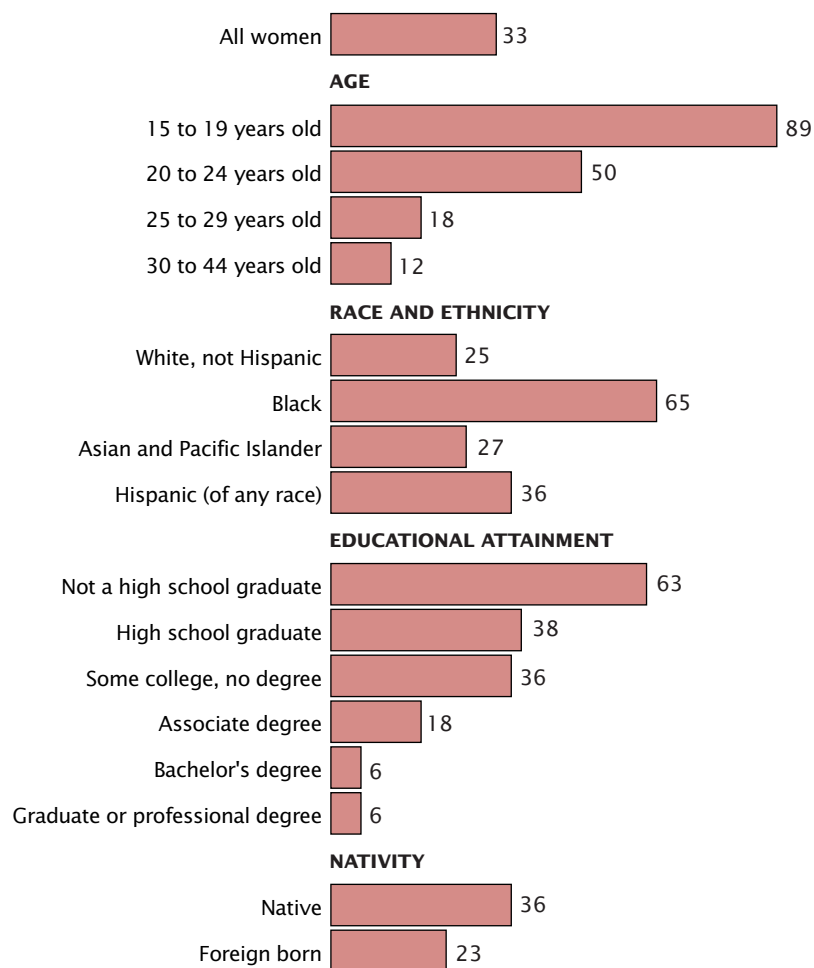
<sup>1</sup>Includes separated women.

Note: Since the number of women who have had a birth during the 12-month period was tabulated and not the actual numbers of births themselves, a small underestimation of fertility for this period may exist because of the omission of: (1) multiple births; (2) more than one live birth occurring to a woman in a 12-month period (the woman is only counted once); (3) women who had births in the period and who died by the survey date; (4) women who were in institutions and therefore not in the survey universe; (5) 2 percent of births in a 12-month period (only 51 weeks of data are tabulated in the CPS due to the mid-to-late-June interview schedule). These losses may be somewhat offset by the inclusion in the CPS of births to immigrants who did not have their children born in the United States and births to nonresident women who had their children born in the United States. These births would not have been recorded in the vital registration system. The ages of the women in this table and similar tables in this report refer to the age of women at the time of the survey and not at the birth of the child.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, June 2002.

Figure 1.  
**Births Out of Wedlock: June 2002**

(Percent of births born out of wedlock in the preceding 12 months to women in specified categories)



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, June 2002.

Among foreign-born women 15 to 44 years old, those of Hispanic origin had a higher fertility rate in 2002 (86 births per 1,000 women) than those not of Hispanic origin (57 births per 1,000 women), and a higher average number of births per woman (1.8 and 1.2, respectively).<sup>8</sup> Consistent with their higher fertility rates, foreign-born Hispanic

women were less likely to be childless (27 percent) than were foreign-born women not of Hispanic origin (44 percent). In 2002, 59 percent of births to foreign-born women were to women of Hispanic origin, although they represented only 49 percent of foreign-born women in the childbearing ages.

<sup>8</sup> In order to control for differences in the age distributions of Hispanic and non-Hispanic immigrants, the total fertility rate for each of these populations was constructed from age-specific fertility rates from the

June CPS. Hispanic women who were foreign-born had an estimated total rate of 2.5 births per woman compared with 1.7 births per woman for non-Hispanic women who were foreign born. Also, see footnote 1.

Among native women, fertility rates for Hispanic women were also higher than those of non-Hispanic women (78 births per 1,000 and 58 births per 1,000, respectively), as were the average number of children born per woman (1.3 and 1.2, respectively). However, levels of childlessness were not significantly different between the two groups. A key reason for the difference in overall fertility rates between Hispanic and non-Hispanic native women was the high fertility of Hispanic women 20 to 24 years old. Among Hispanic women 20 to 24 years old, the fertility rate was 131 births per 1,000 women; the corresponding fertility rate for non-Hispanic women was 81 births per 1,000 women. At other ages, there were no significant differences in fertility rates between the two groups.

## OUT-OF-WEDLOCK CHILDBEARING

### Annual estimates for 2002

Estimates from the June 2002 CPS indicate that approximately 1.3 million women gave birth out of wedlock in the 12-month period preceding the survey, representing 33 percent of all births during this period. About 1.1 million births were to never-married women, while 143,000 were to women who were widowed or divorced at the time of the survey (see Table 3). These estimates may vary slightly from those reported by NCHS because marital status in the CPS is recorded at the time of the survey and not at the time of the actual birth.<sup>9</sup> Some women in the CPS

<sup>9</sup> Preliminary vital statistics estimates for the calendar year 2002 indicate that unmarried women (all ages) had 1.4 million births, 34 percent of all births. (Brady E. Hamilton, et al., "Births: Preliminary Data for 2002." *National Vital Statistics Report*, Vol. 51, No. 11. National Center for Health Statistics, Hyattsville, MD, 2003, Table C).

Table 4.  
**Fertility Indicators for Women 15 to 44 Years Old by Cohabitation Status: June 2002**

(Numbers in thousands)

Cohabitation status	Number of women	Mean age in years	Percent childless	Women who had a child in the last year			Children ever born per 1,000 women
				Number with a birth	Births per 1,000 women	First births per 1,000 women	
<b>Total .....</b>	<b>61,361</b>	<b>30.0</b>	<b>43.5</b>	<b>3,766</b>	<b>61.4</b>	<b>23.1</b>	<b>1,211</b>
Married, spouse in household .....	27,828	34.5	18.5	2,382	85.6	29.6	1,784
Unmarried partner in household <sup>1</sup> .....	3,531	29.2	45.0	307	87.0	42.8	1,124
No partner in household <sup>2</sup> .....	30,001	26.0	66.5	1,077	35.9	14.6	689

<sup>1</sup>Includes women of any marital status who were living with an opposite sex unmarried partner at the time of the survey.

<sup>2</sup>Includes women of any marital status who were **not** living with an opposite sex partner at the time of the survey.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, June 2002.

who gave birth in the last year may have subsequently married or divorced by the time of the survey. In addition, out-of-wedlock birth data from NCHS are recorded by the physician on the birth certificate at the time of the child's birth, whereas CPS estimates of out-of-wedlock births are based on the information provided by the respondent at the time of the interview.

### Characteristics of women with an out-of-wedlock birth

Out-of-wedlock childbearing occurs most frequently among younger women (see Figure 1). In 2002, 89 percent of births to teenagers were out of wedlock, compared with 50 percent of births to women in their early twenties. The proportion declined to 12 percent for women 30 years old and over. The majority (65 percent) of births to Black women in 2002 were out of wedlock, compared with 36 percent for Hispanic women and 25 percent for non-Hispanic White women. The proportion of births born out of wedlock among foreign-born women was considerably lower (23 percent) than among native women (36 percent).

Figure 1 also shows an inverse relationship between educational attainment and the proportion of

births out of wedlock, which ranged from 63 percent among mothers who had not graduated from high school to only 6 percent among women who had either a bachelor's degree or a graduate/professional degree.

### Births to cohabiting women

Cohabitation between unmarried-opposite-sex partners may increase the likelihood of an out-of-wedlock birth compared with unmarried people who are not cohabiting, as living with a partner may increase sexual activity.<sup>10</sup> Table 4 shows that the birth rate among women who were living with an unmarried partner, 87 per 1,000 women, is not different from that of women living with a husband (86 per 1,000 women), but much higher than the rate of women living

without an opposite-sex partner (36 per 1,000 women).

First-birth rates were highest among cohabiting women, followed by women living with a husband, and then women without partners. Levels of childlessness reflect a different pattern, with married-husband-present women the least likely to be childless, followed by cohabiting women, and women without partners (19 percent, 45 percent, and 67 percent, respectively). Cohabiting women probably had higher first-birth rates and levels of childlessness than currently married women because they were younger on average and had fewer years during which they could be in a partnered union.

## LABOR FORCE CHARACTERISTICS OF MOTHERS WITH INFANTS

### Change in labor force patterns since 1976

In June 2002, 2.1 million women who had infants were in the labor force: 1.9 million (91 percent) were employed at the time of the survey, while another 189,000 were unemployed (see Table 3). The Census Bureau first recorded labor force participation rates of mothers

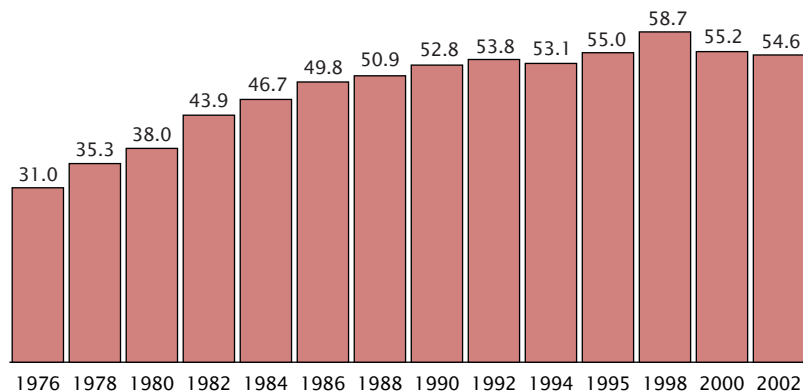
<sup>10</sup> See Davis, Kingsley and Judith Blake. 1956. "Social Structures and Fertility," *Economic Development and Cultural Change*, 4 (211-235).

Cohabitation, in this report, is determined by whether a woman is living with a male unmarried partner, where either the woman or her partner is the householder. People in a partnered relationship but who are not living together in the same household, or if neither is identified as the householder, are not tabulated in this report (for example, the daughter of the householder living with her partner who would be identified as a nonrelative of the householder would not be tabulated).

Figure 2.

### Labor Force Participation Among Mothers With Infants: 1976 to 2002

(Percent of all women age 15-44 who had a child in the last 12 months who were in the labor force)



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, selected years, June 1976 to June 2002.

with infants in 1976, when the rate was 31 percent among women who had had a child in the past year.<sup>11</sup> New mothers' labor force involvement increased or held steady from 1976 through 1998, when it peaked at 59 percent (see Figure 2). The 2000 participation level of 55 percent was the first statistically significant decline since 1976 and its level was not different from 2002 (also 55 percent). Changes in the labor force participation of women with infants could signal changes in the need for child care, in child rearing practices, in future childbearing and birth spacing patterns, and in the demand for employer-sponsored maternity leave benefits.

<sup>11</sup> The labor force participation rate is defined as the percentage of people in a specified population group who are either employed or looking for work. Mothers are defined in this report as women age 15 to 44 years old who have had at least one live birth, regardless of whether any of their children currently reside with them. Infants are defined as children under 1 year (less than 12 months) old.

Table 5 shows trends in the labor force participation of mothers with infants from 1990 to 2002. In both 1990 and 1994, the overall rate was 53 percent. The only group that increased their labor force participation rate in this period was women whose marital status was not "married — husband present": from 44 percent to 50 percent.

During the next 4-year period, from 1994 to 1998, the overall labor force participation rate increased from 53 percent to 59 percent. Increases occurred among women 25 years old and over, women with two or more children, Black women, both married and unmarried women, and women who were high school graduates.

From 1998 to 2000, the overall participation rate of mothers with infants dropped from 59 percent to 55 percent. Declines occurred in this period among mothers 30 years old and over, mothers who were White, and mothers who had 1 or more years of college.

While the rate for married mothers with infants during this period declined from 60 percent to 54 percent — back to its 1994 level — the rate for unmarried mothers with infants remained unchanged in 2000 at 57 percent.

Between 2000 and 2002, the labor force participation rate remained unchanged at 55 percent. Declines, however, occurred in the labor force participation of Black mothers and those with less than a high school education. The declines since 1998 suggest that economic or lifestyle changes may be underway that merit continued scrutiny.

### Current labor force participation among mothers

Table 6 shows the differences in labor force participation of mothers 15 to 44 years old by whether or not they had a child between July 2001 and June 2002. Mothers who had a child in the last year recorded lower labor force participation rates (55 percent) than did other mothers (72 percent). Among childless women, 71 percent were in the labor force, not significantly different from mothers without infants.<sup>12</sup>

Women who seek to return to work shortly after giving birth may want part-time employment so they can devote more time to providing care to their newborns. Figure 3 shows that among employed mothers,

<sup>12</sup> A comparison of childless women and mothers without infants yields no difference in labor force participation. Motherhood likely has the greatest impact on employment during the first year. After that, mothers and childless women may have similar labor force participation rates. Data for first-time mothers who had a child in the period 1991-94 indicate that 78 percent of women who worked during their first pregnancy returned to work within 12 months of their child's birth (see Kristin Smith, Barbara Downs and Martin O'Connell. *Maternity Leave and Employment Patterns: 1961-1995*. Current Population Reports, P70-79. U.S. Census Bureau. Washington, DC, 2001; Table I).

Table 5.

### Changes in Labor Force Participation Among Mothers 15 to 44 Years Old With Infants by Selected Characteristics: June 1990, 1994, 1998, 2000, and 2002

(Numbers in thousands. Limited to women with a birth in the 12-month period preceding the survey)

Characteristic	Percent of mothers in the labor force					Percentage point difference 1990-1994	Percentage point difference 1994-1998	Percentage point difference 1998-2000	Percentage point difference 2000-2002
	1990	1994	1998	2000	2002				
<b>Total number of mothers with infants</b> .....	<b>3,913</b>	<b>3,890</b>	<b>3,671</b>	<b>3,934</b>	<b>3,766</b>	<b>(X)</b>	<b>(X)</b>	<b>(X)</b>	<b>(X)</b>
Percent in labor force .....	52.8	53.1	58.7	55.2	54.6	0.3	*5.6	*-3.5	-0.6
<b>AGE</b>									
15 to 19 years .....	42.8	39.3	43.2	46.0	38.9	-3.5	3.9	2.8	-7.1
20 to 24 years .....	45.5	51.0	56.4	51.9	54.7	5.5	5.4	-4.5	2.8
25 to 29 years .....	55.3	54.5	61.9	59.5	54.0	-0.8	*7.4	-2.4	-5.5
30 to 44 years .....	58.9	57.1	63.0	57.7	60.9	-1.8	*5.9	*-5.3	3.2
<b>CHILDREN EVER BORN</b>									
One child .....	59.7	59.0	60.8	57.5	59.8	-0.7	1.8	-3.3	2.3
Two or more children .....	48.4	48.9	57.3	53.5	51.5	0.5	*8.4	-3.8	-2.0
<b>RACE AND ETHNICITY</b>									
White .....	54.5	55.4	58.4	53.1	53.8	0.9	3.0	*-5.3	0.7
White, non-Hispanic .....	(NA)	59.2	61.6	56.8	56.8	(NA)	(NA)	*-4.8	-
Black .....	46.9	47.0	63.0	65.8	57.4	0.1	*16.0	2.8	*-8.4
Asian and Pacific Islander .....	48.0	37.7	49.9	56.3	51.1	-10.3	12.2	6.4	-5.2
Hispanic (of any race) .....	43.8	37.7	45.7	41.8	45.2	-6.1	8.0	-3.9	3.4
<b>MARITAL STATUS</b>									
Married—husband present .....	56.4	54.5	59.5	54.1	55.4	-1.9	*5.0	*-5.4	1.3
All other <sup>1</sup> .....	43.5	49.7	57.1	57.2	53.3	*6.2	*7.4	0.1	-3.9
<b>EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT<sup>2</sup></b>									
Not a high school graduate .....	31.5	33.5	37.7	39.0	32.2	2.0	4.2	1.3	*-6.8
High school graduate .....	51.9	48.1	58.4	55.0	56.1	-3.8	*10.3	-3.4	1.1
College, 1 or more years .....	65.3	66.2	67.9	63.5	63.2	0.9	1.7	*-4.4	-0.3
Some college or Associate degree .....	62.8	63.3	67.3	63.2	62.9	0.5	4.0	-4.1	-0.3
Bachelor's degree and above .....	68.0	69.6	68.5	63.8	63.5	1.6	-1.1	-4.7	-0.3

\* Indicates significant differences at the 90-percent confidence level. - Represents zero or rounds to zero. NA Not available. X Not applicable.

<sup>1</sup>Includes married, spouse absent; separated; divorced; widowed; and never-married women. <sup>2</sup>Educational attainment categories in 1990 based on years of school completed.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, June 2002.

those with infants were more likely to work part-time (29 percent) than were those without infants (23 percent).<sup>13</sup> Mothers of all ages who had infants, except for teenage mothers, worked full-time more often than part-time. School may compete with employment for teenage mothers' time, making them more likely to work part-time rather than full-time (see Table 6).

<sup>13</sup> Full-time workers are employed people who worked 35 or more hours per week in the interview reference week.

#### Differences in full-time and part-time employment by educational attainment

Labor force participation is appreciably higher among college-educated mothers with infants than those with a high school education or less. In 2002, 63 percent of women with 1 or more years of college who had had a child in the previous year were in the labor force, compared with 56 percent of high school graduates with infants and only 32 percent of new mothers who were not high school graduates.

New mothers with a graduate or professional degree were three times as likely to work at full-time jobs as at part-time jobs. New mothers who were high school graduates or who had attended college and received an associate degree were twice as likely to work full-time as part-time, while women who did not complete high school were equally likely to work full-time as part-time. Mothers at all education levels with no infant children were at least twice as likely to work full-time.



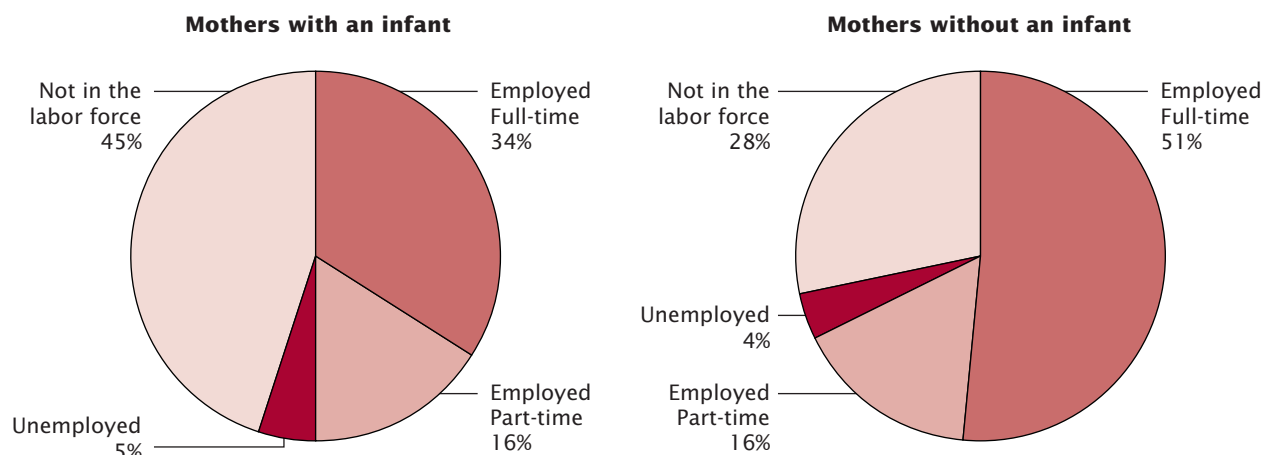
Table 6.  
**Labor Force Participation Among Mothers 15 to 44 Years Old by Fertility Status and Selected Characteristics: June 2002**

(Numbers in thousands. Limited to women with at least one child ever born)

Characteristic	Mothers who had a child in the last year					Mothers who did not have a child in the last year				
	Number of mothers	Percent in labor force				Number of mothers	Percent in labor force			
		Total	Full-time	Part-time	Unemployed		Total	Full-time	Part-time	Unemployed
<b>Total.....</b>	<b>3,766</b>	<b>54.6</b>	<b>33.8</b>	<b>15.7</b>	<b>5.0</b>	<b>30,905</b>	<b>72.0</b>	<b>51.3</b>	<b>16.4</b>	<b>4.3</b>
<b>AGE</b>										
15 to 19 years .....	549	38.9	12.6	18.4	7.9	318	56.9	23.7	20.1	13.0
20 to 24 years .....	872	54.7	32.3	14.5	7.9	2,327	66.4	43.5	15.1	7.8
25 to 29 years .....	897	54.0	38.5	11.9	3.6	4,156	69.0	47.1	16.2	5.8
30 to 44 years .....	1,449	60.9	39.9	17.9	3.1	24,104	73.2	53.1	16.5	3.6
<b>CHILDREN EVER BORN AND AGE OF WOMAN</b>										
One child .....	1,415	59.8	37.0	15.3	7.5	9,298	75.2	56.4	14.7	4.1
15 to 19 years .....	272	48.3	15.4	20.7	12.2	242	56.9	23.8	19.1	13.9
20 to 24 years .....	438	58.3	34.6	12.8	10.8	1,455	68.2	44.7	16.8	6.7
25 to 29 years .....	306	59.6	41.0	14.6	4.0	1,746	76.1	55.9	16.3	3.9
30 to 44 years .....	399	69.5	51.3	15.0	3.2	5,855	77.5	60.8	13.6	3.1
Two or more children .....	2,351	51.5	31.9	16.0	3.5	21,607	70.6	49.1	17.1	4.4
15 to 19 years .....	277	29.7	9.9	16.1	3.7	76	56.7	23.4	23.1	10.2
20 to 24 years .....	433	51.0	30.0	16.2	4.9	872	63.3	41.6	12.1	9.6
25 to 29 years .....	591	51.1	37.2	10.5	3.4	2,410	64.0	40.7	16.1	7.1
30 to 44 years .....	1,050	57.6	35.6	19.0	3.0	18,249	71.9	50.7	17.5	3.7
<b>RACE AND ETHNICITY</b>										
White .....	2,958	53.8	33.0	16.9	3.9	24,230	71.5	49.4	18.3	3.8
White non-Hispanic .....	2,262	56.8	34.0	19.5	3.4	19,516	73.2	50.1	19.7	3.4
Black .....	571	57.4	36.7	10.0	10.6	4,823	76.4	60.0	9.1	7.3
Asian and Pacific Islander .....	181	51.1	35.2	11.7	4.1	1,426	66.3	52.2	10.7	3.4
Hispanic (of any race) .....	750	45.2	29.9	8.7	6.6	5,115	64.2	46.3	12.6	5.2
<b>MARITAL STATUS</b>										
Married—husband present .....	2,382	55.4	36.4	16.3	2.7	20,297	69.1	48.0	18.3	2.8
Married—husband absent, separated, divorced, or widowed .....	266	62.9	44.8	9.8	8.4	5,848	80.3	62.0	11.9	6.5
Never married .....	1,118	51.0	25.8	16.0	9.2	4,760	73.8	51.9	13.9	8.0
<b>EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT</b>										
Not a high school graduate .....	812	32.2	13.0	11.0	8.1	4,590	55.4	34.4	14.0	7.0
High school, 4 years .....	1,005	56.1	31.6	17.4	7.1	10,527	73.0	53.0	15.0	5.1
College, 1 or more years .....	1,949	63.2	43.7	16.9	2.6	15,789	76.1	55.1	18.1	3.0
No degree .....	750	60.8	41.4	16.0	3.4	5,983	75.8	54.5	17.0	4.4
Associate degree .....	221	70.0	43.7	19.4	7.0	3,205	80.0	55.6	20.6	3.8
Bachelor's degree .....	683	63.2	45.0	17.0	1.2	4,975	73.3	54.1	17.7	1.5
Graduate or professional degree .....	294	64.1	46.2	17.0	0.9	1,626	78.2	59.1	18.3	0.8
<b>ANNUAL FAMILY INCOME</b>										
Under \$10,000 .....	355	50.1	20.7	14.1	15.4	2,167	55.0	25.8	16.5	12.7
\$10,000 to \$19,999 .....	472	43.2	26.2	12.7	4.4	2,992	66.2	42.7	16.0	7.5
\$20,000 to \$24,999 .....	215	48.5	26.8	13.0	8.7	1,853	70.9	53.3	12.6	5.0
\$25,000 to \$29,999 .....	194	42.7	22.9	13.9	5.9	1,819	72.2	52.4	12.3	7.4
\$30,000 to \$34,999 .....	264	57.1	41.3	10.6	5.2	1,768	74.1	54.5	15.7	3.9
\$35,000 to \$49,999 .....	457	60.9	37.2	18.9	4.8	4,371	75.2	54.6	16.7	3.9
\$50,000 to \$74,999 .....	554	58.6	38.3	17.1	3.2	5,429	78.8	59.2	17.5	2.2
\$75,000 and over .....	826	65.0	44.2	18.8	2.0	6,448	75.5	53.6	20.1	1.8
Not ascertained .....	428	45.9	27.7	14.9	3.3	4,056	66.6	50.5	13.0	3.2
<b>NATIVITY</b>										
Native born .....	3,129	57.2	35.0	17.4	4.9	25,787	74.4	52.9	17.2	4.3
Foreign born .....	637	41.6	28.3	7.8	5.6	5,118	59.8	43.2	12.5	4.1

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, June 2002.

Figure 3.  
**Employment Status Among Mothers 15 to 44 Years Old: June 2002**  
 (Percent distribution)



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, June 2002.

These data suggest that women with higher levels of education return to work more rapidly after giving birth and are more likely to return as full-time workers than are women with fewer years of schooling. The likelihood of returning to work after a child's birth is highly related to work experience prior to and during pregnancy (for example, hours worked per week and when the woman stopped working).<sup>14</sup>

### Demographic differences in labor force participation

What other factors influence the decision to return to work after childbirth? The marital status of the mother is related to her labor force participation. Women who are unmarried and who lack a spouse's income may be more dependent on

their own employment to support their families. However, the absence of a husband may restrict the economic resources available for child care services and means one fewer adult is available as a potential child care provider.

Table 6 shows that despite these potential impediments to working, 45 percent of separated, divorced, and widowed women with infants were employed full-time — about the same as women who were married (36 percent) and more than women who had never married (26 percent). Among mothers in the labor force who have infants, unmarried women or those living without their spouses were most likely to be unemployed and possibly in need of child care services or job training assistance.

Among mothers without infants, those who were separated, divorced, and widowed were the most likely to work full-time, followed by those who never married, then those living with a

husband. Never-married mothers without infants were most likely to be unemployed, while their married counterparts were least likely to be looking for work.

Native women with infants participated in the labor force at a considerably higher rate (57 percent) than foreign-born women with infants (42 percent). A similar difference was evident for native and foreign-born mothers without infants (74 percent compared to 60 percent), perhaps suggesting that language or job skills influence these differences.

Young mothers, regardless of the age of their children, are less likely to be in the labor force than older mothers. Thirty-nine percent of teen mothers with infants were in the labor force, compared to 61 percent of new mothers age 30 and over. A similar pattern existed among mothers without infants.

Which mothers with infants experience the greatest difficulty in

<sup>14</sup> Martin O'Connell. *Maternity Leave Arrangements: 1961-85*. Current Population Reports, P23-165. U.S. Census Bureau. Washington, DC, 1990; Kristin Smith, Barbara Downs and Martin O'Connell. *Maternity Leave and Employment Patterns: 1961-1995*. Current Population Reports, P70-79. U.S. Census Bureau. Washington, DC, 2001.

finding jobs? About 20 percent of teenage mothers who were in the labor force were unemployed.<sup>15</sup> Among never-married women with infants, relatively high proportions of those in the labor force were unemployed compared with their currently married counterparts. Among all women with infants, a significantly higher proportion with a high school education or less was unemployed than those with 1 or more years of college. Among mothers with infants living in families with incomes under \$10,000 per year, 31 percent of those in the labor force were unemployed.

In summary, these data indicate that the majority of women with infant children participate in the labor force during their child's first year of life and twice as many are employed full-time as part-time. However, many teenage mothers and women with less than a high school education appear to experience considerable difficulty securing employment.

### **SOURCE OF THE DATA**

Most estimates in this report come from data obtained in the June 2002 Current Population Survey (CPS). Some estimates are based on data obtained by the CPS in earlier years. The U.S. Census Bureau conducts this survey every month, although this report uses only data from the June surveys for its estimates. Comparative estimates on annual births are made with data collected in the Vital Statistics Registration system and are published by the National Center for Health Statistics.

The population represented (the population universe) in the Fertility Supplement to the June 2002 CPS is

the female civilian noninstitutionalized population, 15 to 44 years old, of the United States. The institutionalized population, which is excluded from the population universe, is composed primarily of the population in correctional institutions and nursing homes (91 percent of the 4.1 million institutionalized population in Census 2000).

### **ACCURACY OF THE ESTIMATES**

Statistics from surveys are subject to sampling and nonsampling error. All comparisons presented in this report have taken sampling error into account and are significant at the 90-percent confidence level. This means the 90-percent confidence interval for the difference between the estimates being compared does not include zero. Nonsampling errors in surveys may be attributed to a variety of sources, such as how the survey was designed, how respondents interpret questions, how able and willing respondents are to provide correct answers, and how accurately the answers are coded and classified. The Census Bureau employs quality control procedures throughout the production process including the overall design of surveys, the wording of questions, review of the work of interviewers and coders, and statistical review of reports to minimize these errors.

The Current Population Survey weighting procedure uses ratio estimation whereby sample estimates are adjusted to independent estimates of the national population by age, race, sex, and Hispanic origin. This weighting partially corrects for bias due to undercoverage, but biases may still be present when people who are missed by the survey differ from those interviewed in ways other than age, race, sex, and Hispanic origin. How this weighting procedure affects other

variables in the survey is not precisely known. All of these considerations affect comparisons across different surveys or data sources.

For further information on statistical standards and the computation and use of standard errors, go to [www.census.gov/population/www/socdemo/fertility/2002/sa02.html](http://www.census.gov/population/www/socdemo/fertility/2002/sa02.html) or contact Jana Shepherd of the Census Bureau Demographic Statistical Methods Division on the Internet at [dsmd.source.and.accuracy@census.gov](mailto:dsmd.source.and.accuracy@census.gov).

### **MORE INFORMATION**

Detailed tables with characteristics of women in the childbearing ages by fertility indicators are available on the Internet ([www.census.gov](http://www.census.gov)); search by clicking on "F" for "Fertility of American Women Data" under the "Subjects A to Z" heading on the Census Bureau home page.

### **CONTACTS**

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### **USER COMMENTS**

The Census Bureau welcomes the comments and advice of users of its data and reports. If you have any suggestions or comments, please write to:

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<sup>15</sup> Unemployment rates (percentages) are computed by dividing the number of people in the unemployed category by the total number of people in the labor force.

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