AMERICAN COMMUNITY SURVEY

U.S. CENSUS BUREAU

Measuring Fertility Using the American Community Survey

by Jane Lawler Dye and Tavia Simmons

Population Association of America

Annual Meeting March 29-31, 2001

USCENSUSBUREAU

Helping You Make Informed Decisions

AMERICAN COMMUNITY SURVEY

U.S. CENSUS BUREAU

- The American Community Survey (ACS) is designed to provide economic, social, demographic, and housing information to communities in the United States every year.
- Between November 1998 through October 1999, 31 sites were surveyed for the ACS. Data are available for sites with populations of 65,000 or more.
- The ACS allows us to study small geographic areas throughout the United States in detail and in a timely manner. Never before have we been able to analyze such data to the extent now possible, especially on issues, such as fertility, that are important to both government and private organizations.
  - There is no fertility question on the 2000 Census.
  - Vital statistics, the best source of fertility data, cannot provide detailed information on the characteristics of mothers.

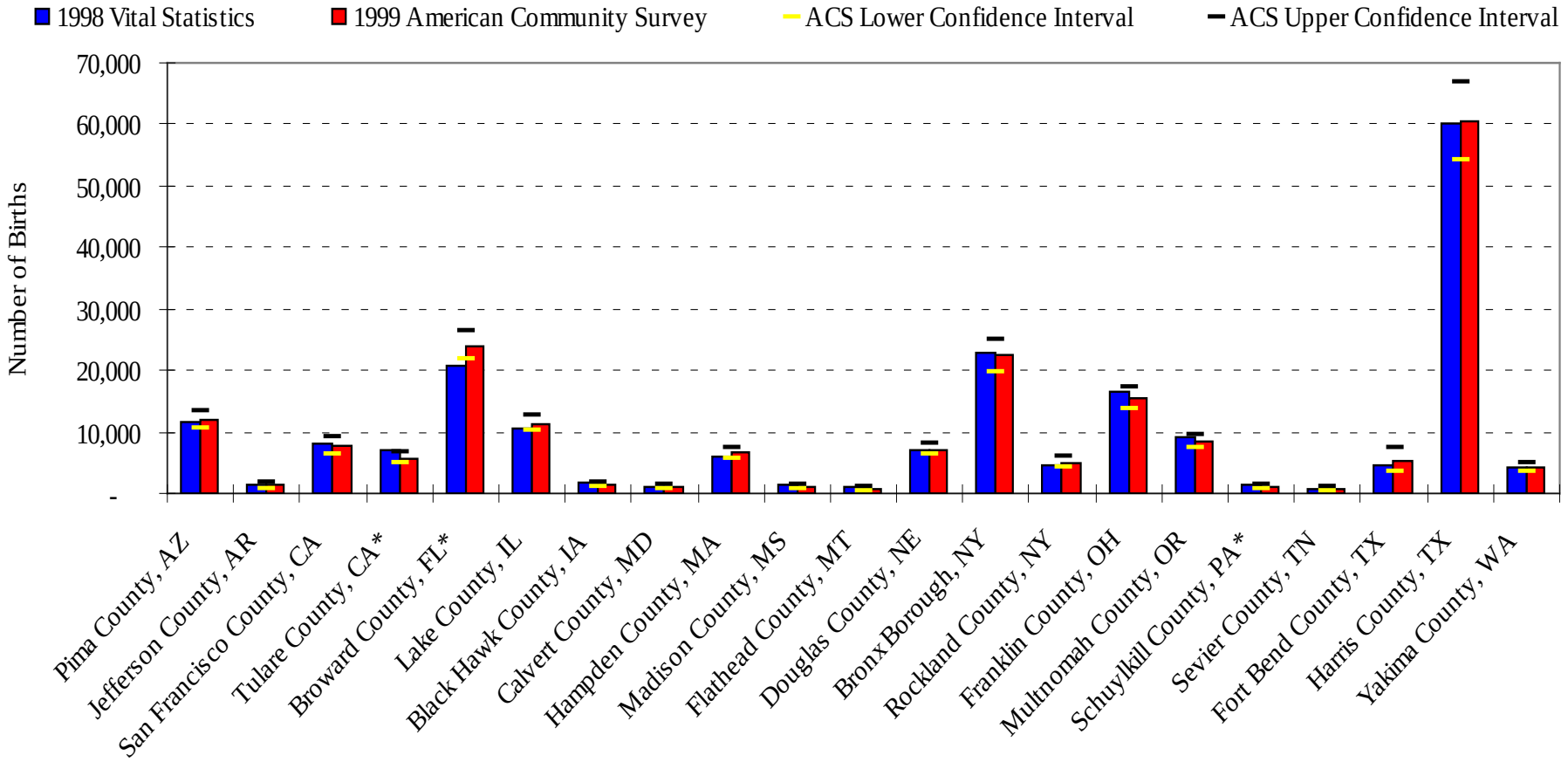
Measuring Fertility

- The ACS asks women between the ages of 15 and 50: “Has this person given birth to any children in the past 12 months?”

- ACS provides a good estimate of fertility.
  - ACS estimates of the number of births in 1999 are not statistically different from the number of births reported by Vital Statistics for 1998, in all but 3 counties (Figure 1).
  - Data from both sources also produced very similar patterns in fertility rates for each county (Figure 2).
  - The average nonmarital birth rate for the ACS sites was 41.9 per 1,000 unmarried women ages 15-44, slightly lower, but similar to the national nonmarital birth rate of 43.9 for 1999 (NCHS, 2000) (Figure 3).

Note: Estimates from surveys are not based on complete counts of the population and are therefore, by their nature, subject to some variability.

Figure 1. Number of Births in the Past 12 Months for Selected Counties: 1998 Vital Statistics and the 1999 American Community Survey

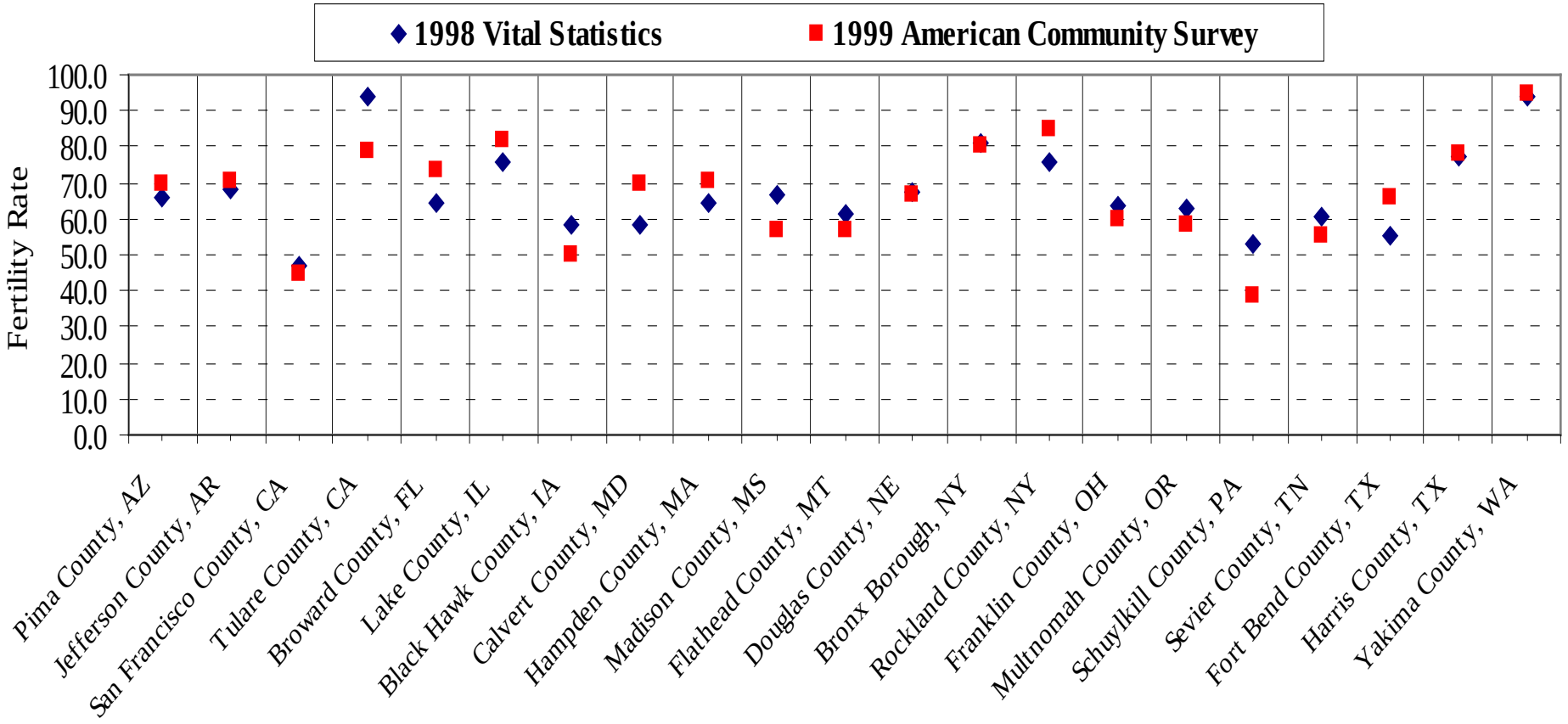


Note: The 90 percent confidence intervals are based on the 1999 ACS estimate of the number of births in the past year. Vital Statistics includes all births for the 12 month period ending July 1, 1998. ACS includes all births to women 15-50 during the 12 month period ending at interview date in 1999.

* Vital Statistics number of births are signifcantly different than ACS number of births.

Source: National Center for Health Statistics, 1998 Vital Statistis, 2001 and U.S. Census Bureau, 1999 American Community Survey, 2000.

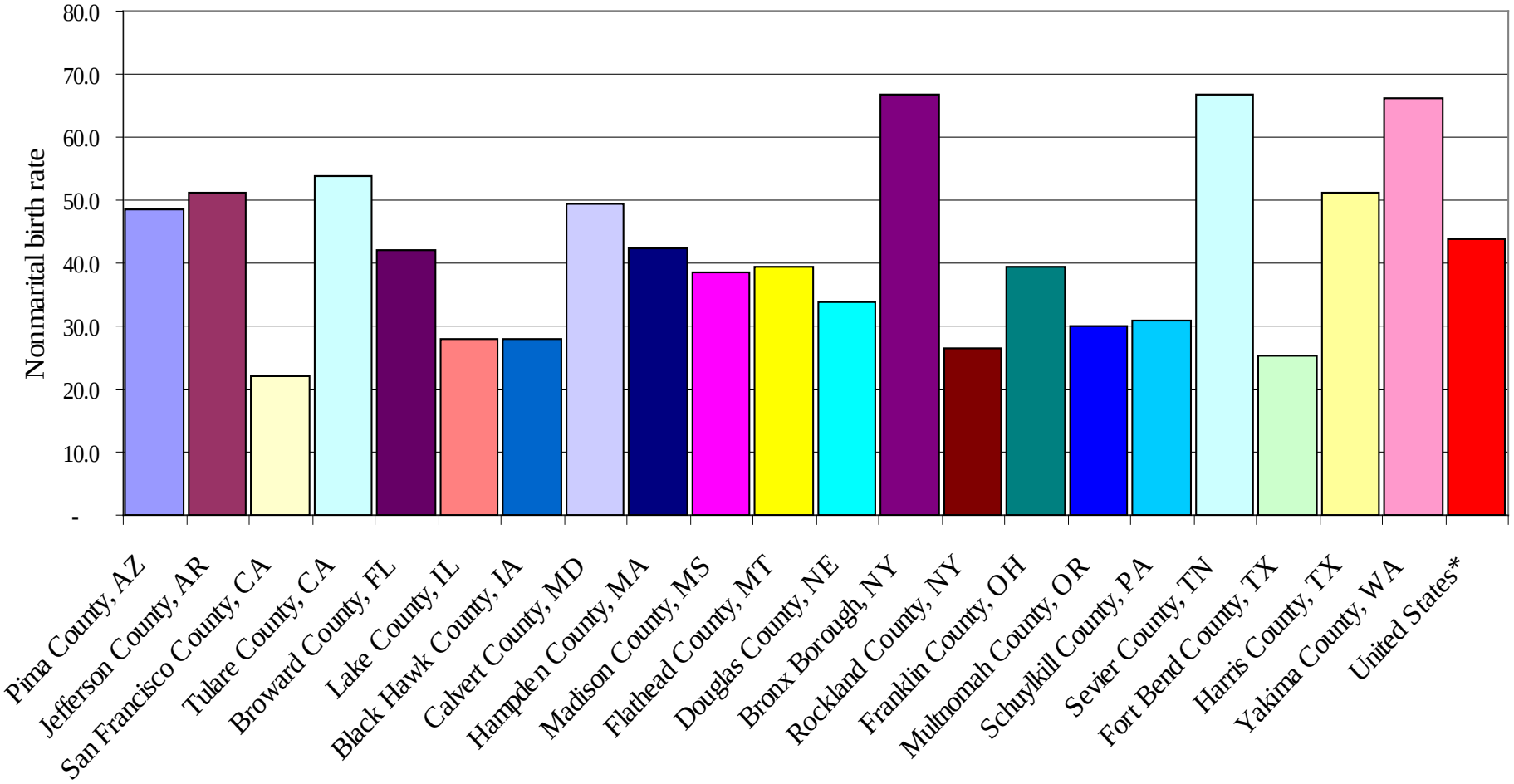
Figure 2. Fertility Rates for Selected Counties: 1998 Vital Statistics and 1999 American Community Survey



Note: Fertility rates from Vital Statistics are total births in 1998 divided by the number of women 15-44 years old from Population Estimates for July 1, 1998. ACS fertility rates are total births divied by the number of women 15-44 years old in 1999. ACS only asks women 15-50 if they had a birth in past year.

Source: National Center for Health Statistics, 1998 Vital Statistics, 2001; U.S. Census Bureau, 1998 Population Estimates, 2000; and 1999 American Community Survey, U.S. Census Bureau, 2000.

Figure 3. Nonmarital Birth Rates for Selected Counties and the United States: 1999



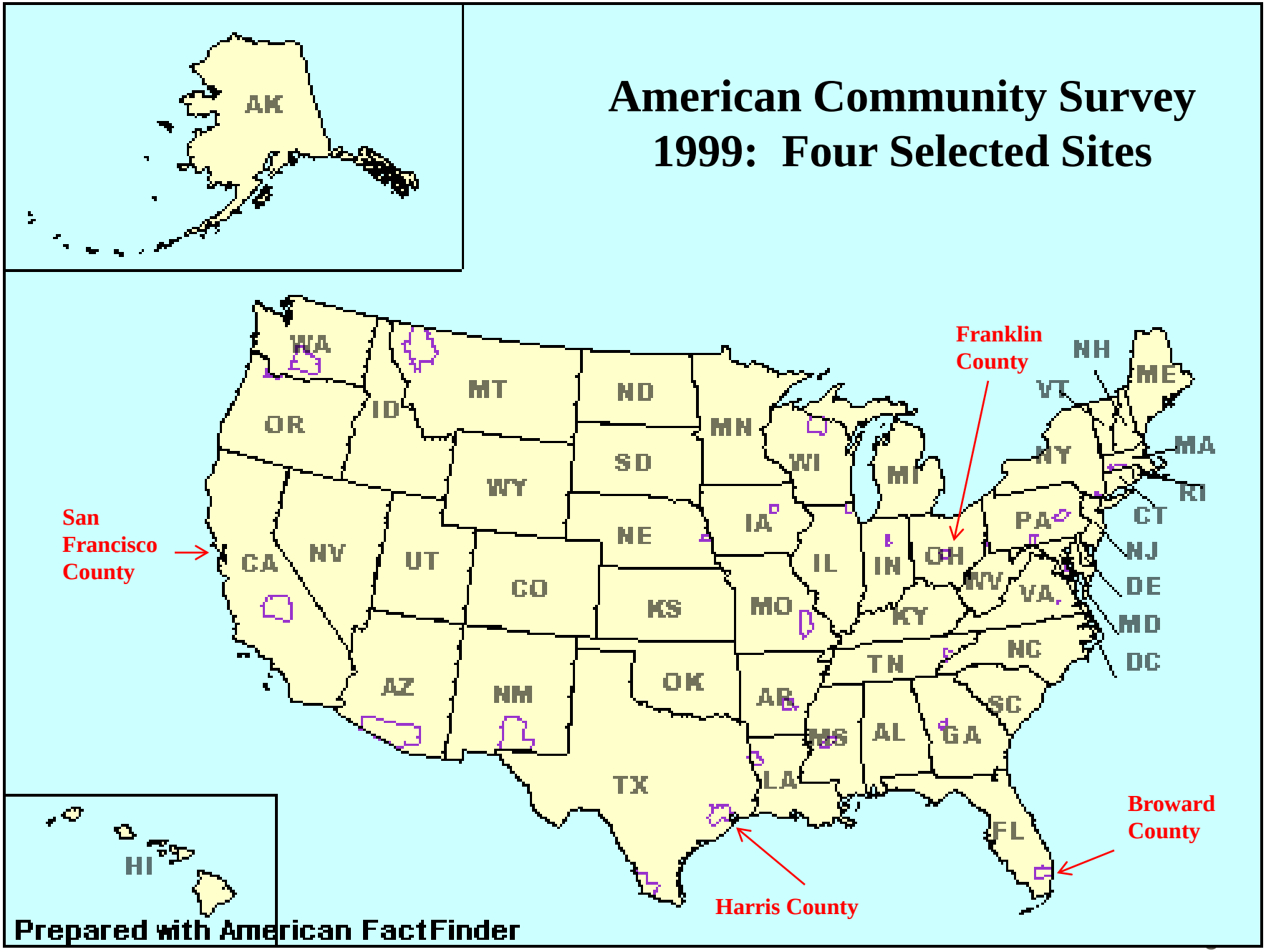
Note: Nonmarital birth rates are based on total births to unmarried women per 1,000 unmarried women of childbearing age (15-44 years old). ACS only asks women age 15-50 if they had a birth in the past 12 months.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 1999 American Community Survey, 2000

*U.S nonmarital birth rate from National Center for Health Statistics, 1999 Vital Statistics Reports, 2000.

Characteristics of Mothers in Four Counties

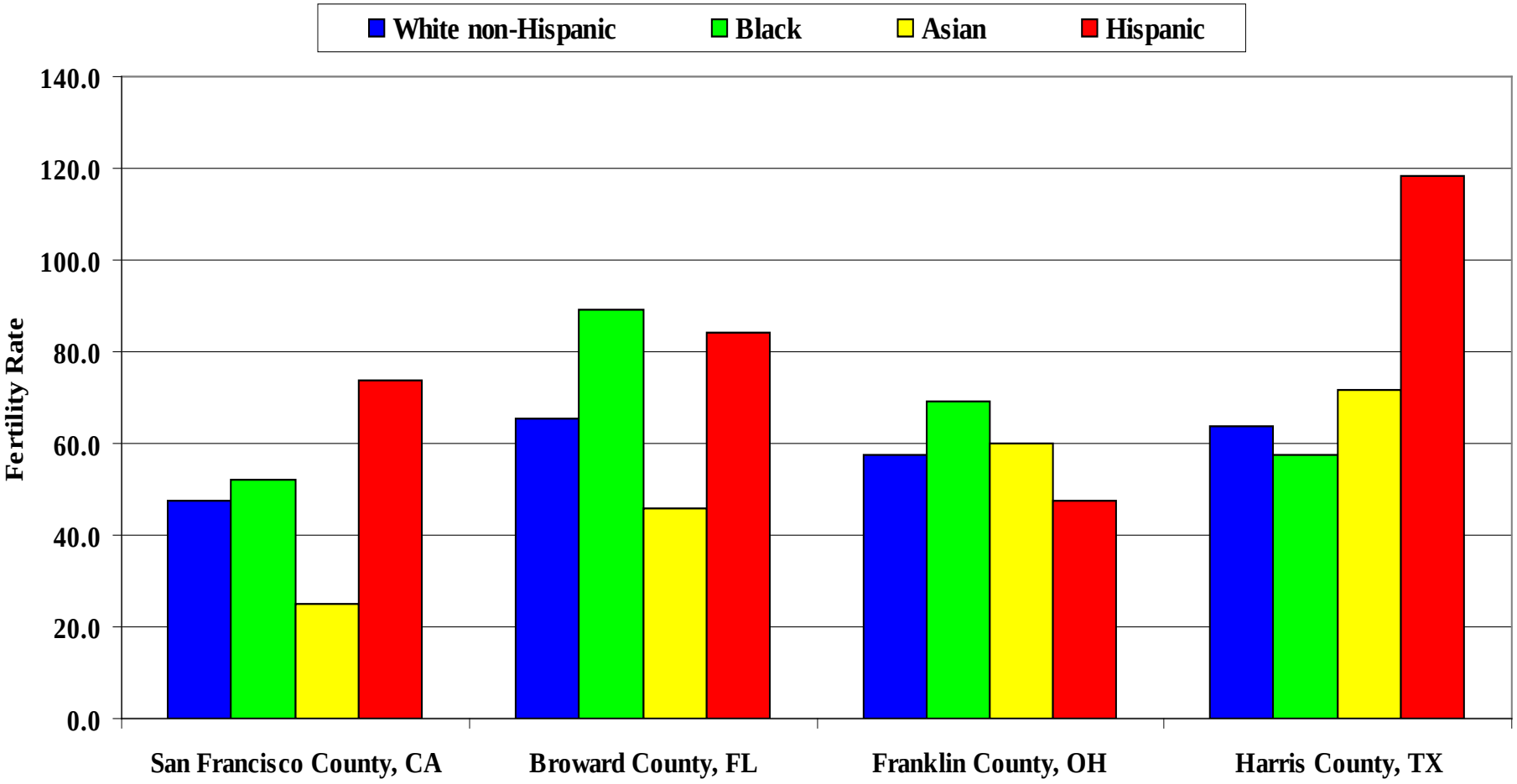
- With this data, researchers will be able to study fertility in conjunction with other circumstances that are important in the lives of women, children and families.
- For example, we present fertility data, characteristics of women, and resources available to new mothers in four counties from different regions of the United States:
  - San Francisco County, California
  - Broward County, Florida
  - Franklin County, Ohio
  - Harris County, Texas


American Community Survey
1999: Four Selected Sites
AK
HI
WA
OR
CA
ID
NV
MT
WY
UT
AZ
CO
NM
ND
SD
NE
KS
OK
TX
MN
IA
MO
AR
LA
WI
IL
MS
MI
IN
AL
KY
TN
OH
WV
GA
FL
SC
NC
VA
PA
NY
VT
NH
ME
MA
RI
CT
NJ
DE
MD
DC
San Francisco County
Franklin County
Harris County
Broward County
Prepared with American FactFinder

Mothers Differ by Area

- Fertility rates in 1999 by race and Hispanic origin (Figure 4):
  - In Harris county, Hispanic women were more likely than others to have had a birth in 1999.
  - In San Francisco, Asian women were least likely to have given birth compared to other women.
- Other characteristics of women with a recent birth (Figure 5):
  - Harris County had a relatively high proportion of teen mothers in 1999.
  - Franklin County had a large proportion of nonmarital births.
  - In Harris county, many new mothers had not completed high school and were living in poverty.
  - Almost half of women with a recent birth in Harris county were not in the labor force.

Figure 4. Fertility Rates by Race and Hispanic Origin for Selected Counties: 1999

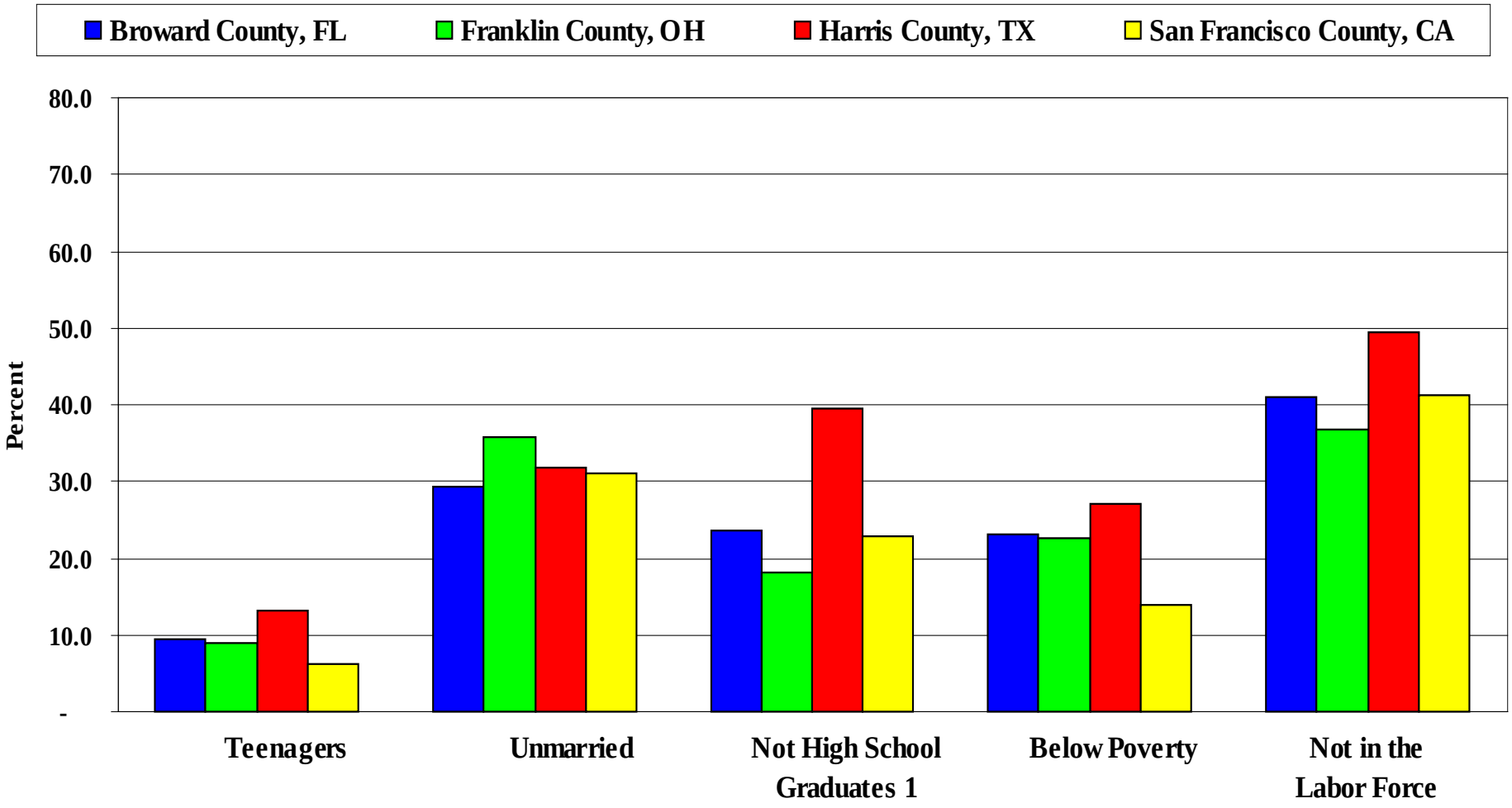


1 People of Hispanic origin may be of any race.

Note: Fertility rates are based on total births per 1,000 women of childbearing age (15-44 years old). ACS asks women age 15-50 if they had a birth in the past 12 months.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 1999 American Community Survey, 2000.

Figure 5. Characteristics of Women with a Birth in the Past 12 Months for Selected Counties: 1999



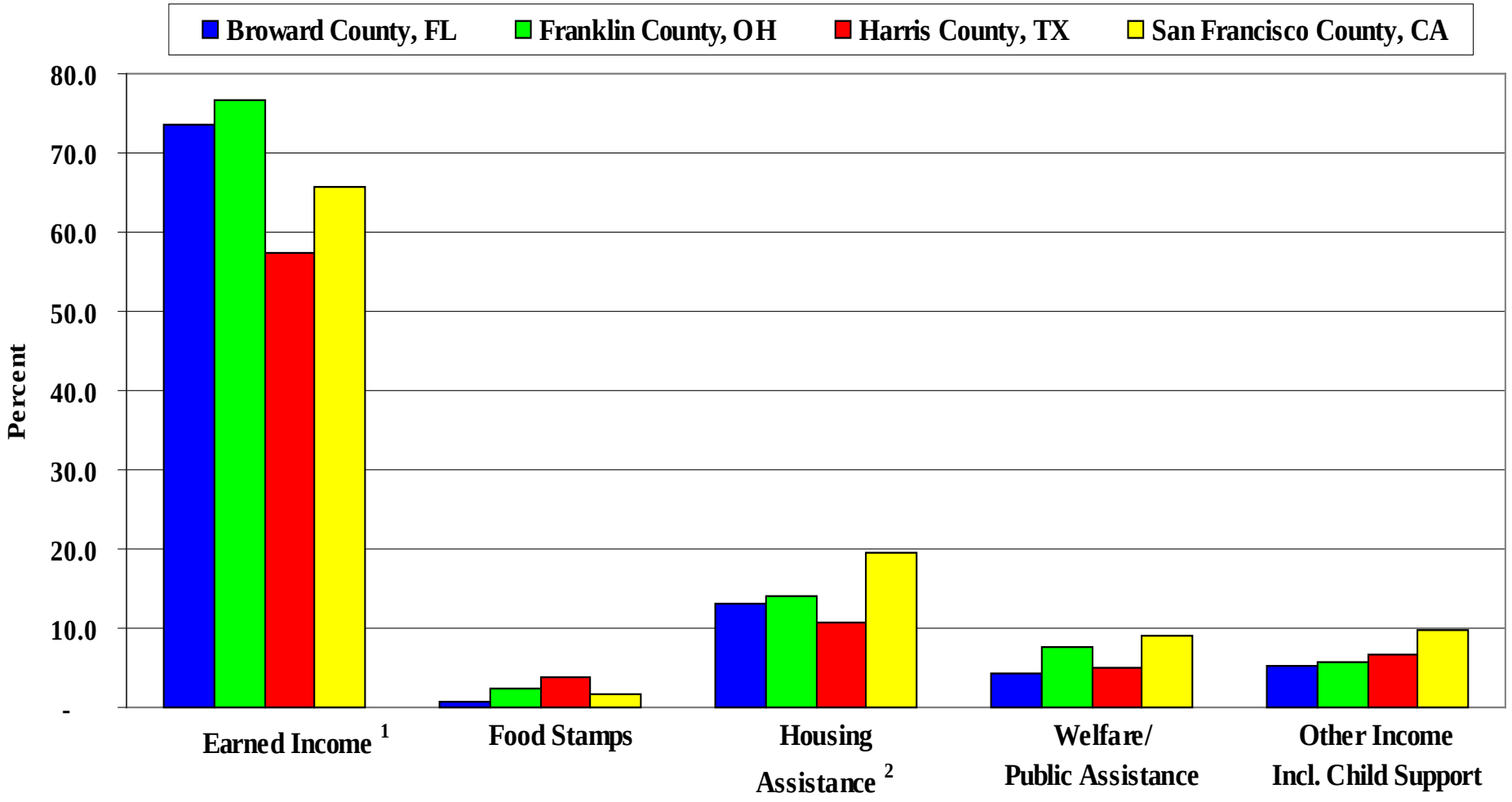
1 Includes 15-18 year old mothers who may receive a High School diploma in the future.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 1999 American Community Survey, 2000.

Economic Resources Differ by Area

- The majority of women with a recent birth acquire most of their economic resources through earnings. For example, in Broward county and Franklin county more than 70% of women with a recent birth earned income in 1999 (Figure 6).
- In San Francisco, where housing is expensive, a relatively large proportion of new mothers (20 percent) received housing assistance compared to the other three areas.
- Very few mothers with infants received any welfare or public assistance, less than 8 percent on average for all of the ACS sites.
- Surprisingly few mothers with a recent birth reported having other income in 1999, a category which includes child support. Only 10 percent received other income on average, while 31 percent on average were unmarried and potentially eligible to receive child support.

Figure 6. Sources of Income of Women with a Birth in the Past 12 Months for Selected Counties: 1999



1 Includes wages, salaries and self employment income.

2 Includes public housing and housing subsidies.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 1999 American Community Survey, 2000.

Detailed Portrait

- Harris County, Texas is located in the Houston metropolitan area.
- Service providers and state legislators may have specific concerns that can be explored with data from the American Community Survey.
- The following detailed portrait provides an example of the degree to which fertility can be studied in a particular geographic area.

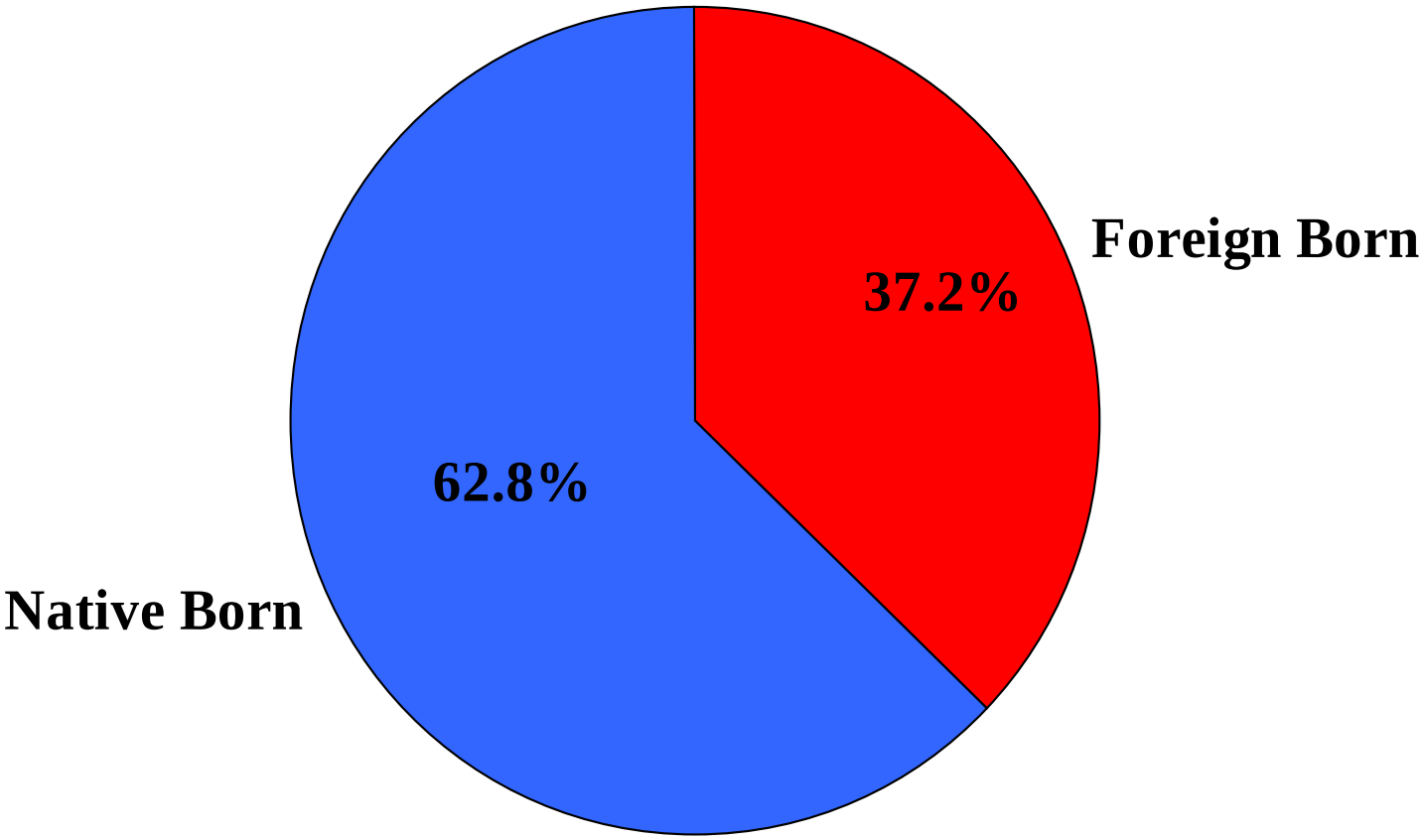
Nativity of Mothers: Harris County, Texas

- This area had a large proportion of foreign born mothers with infants in 1999, 37.2 percent (Figure 7).

- Eighty percent of foreign born women with infants in this area in 1999 were Hispanic (Figure 8).

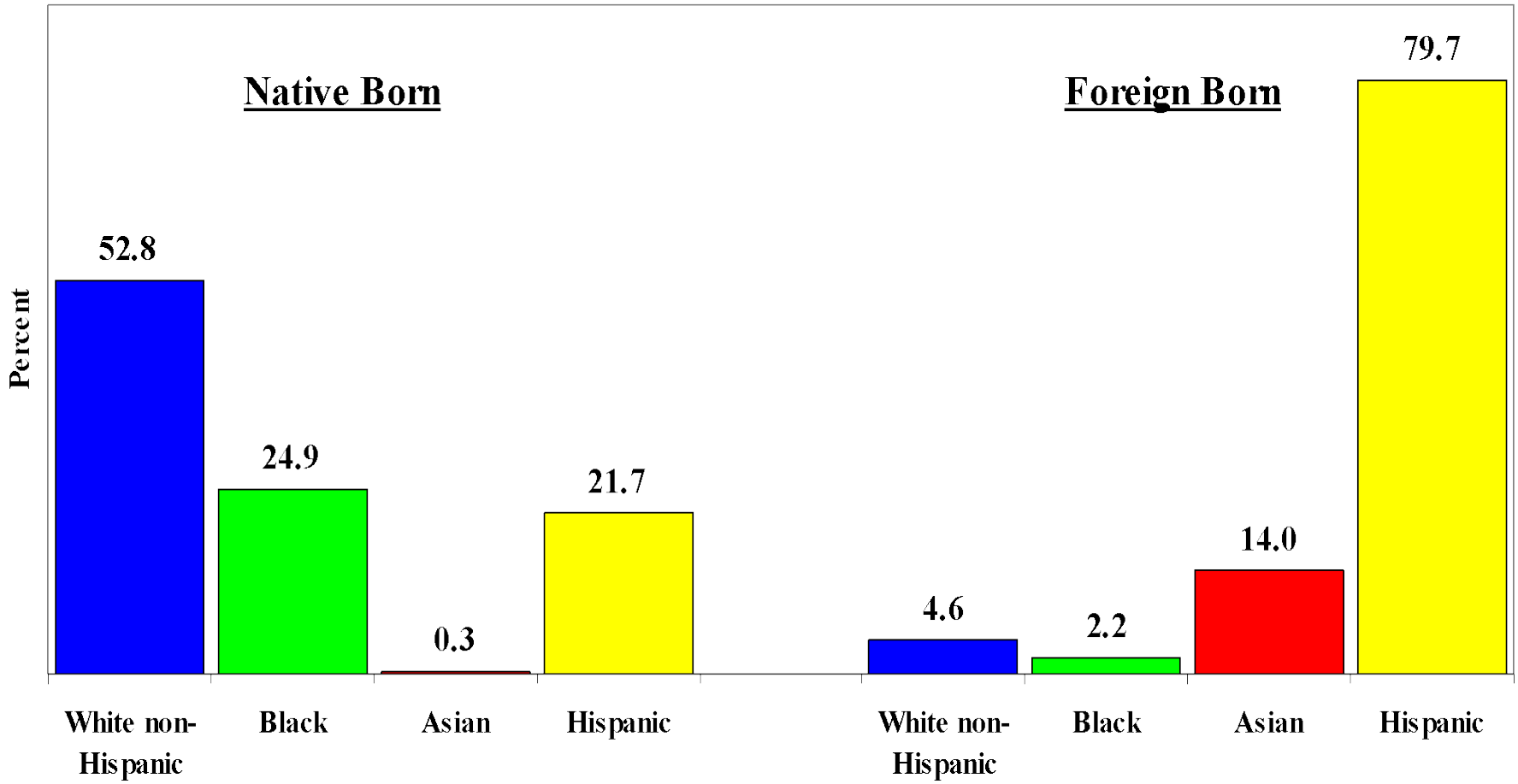
- More than half of these foreign born mothers with infants came to the United States within the last 10 years (Figure 9).

Figure 7. Women with a Birth in the Past 12 Months by Nativity; Harris County, Texas: 1999



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 1999 American Community Survey, 2000.

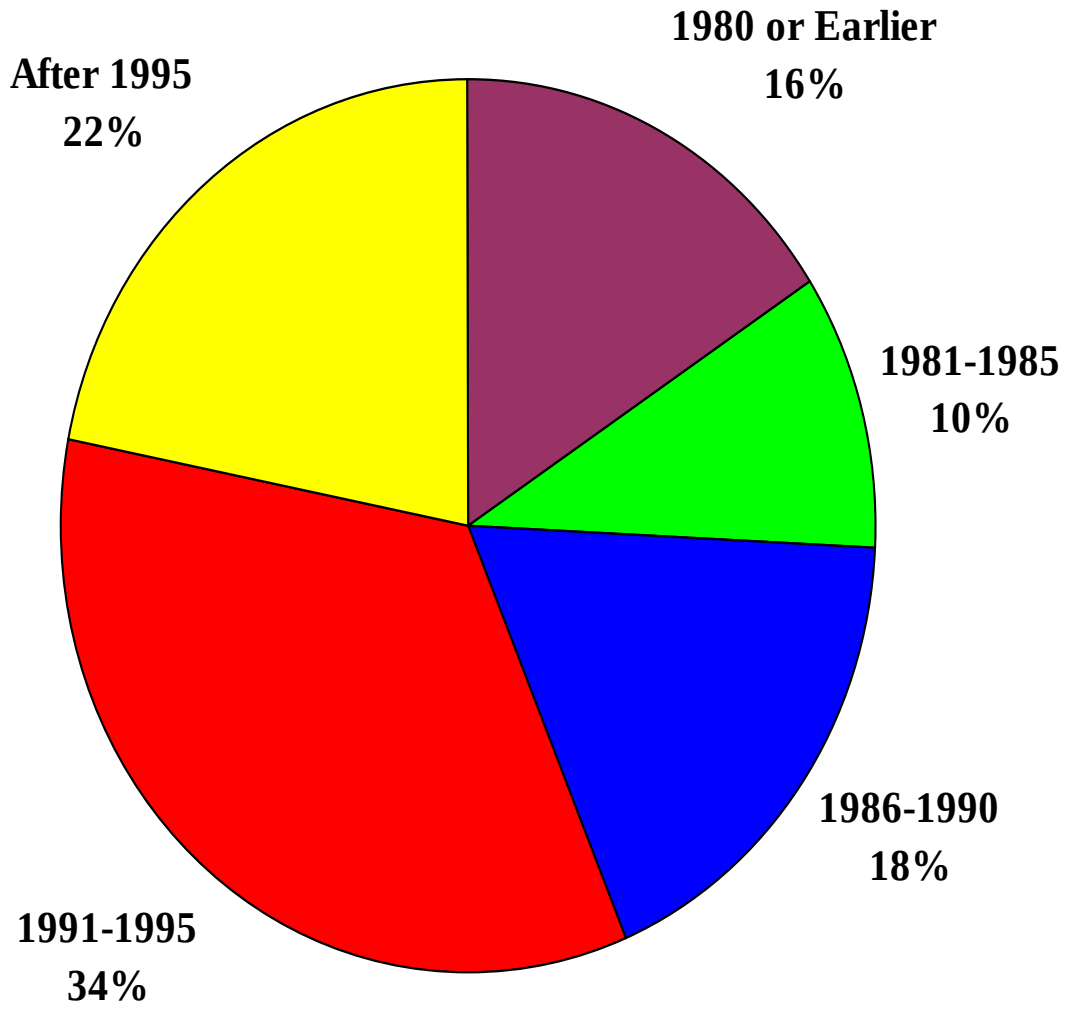
Figure 8. Women with a Birth in the Past 12 Months by Race, Hispanic Origin and Nativity; Harris County, Texas: 1999



[1] People of Hispanic origin may be of any race.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 1999 American Community Survey, 2000.

Figure 9. Foreign Born Women with a Birth in the Past 12 Months by Year of Arrival in the United States; Harris County, Texas: 1999

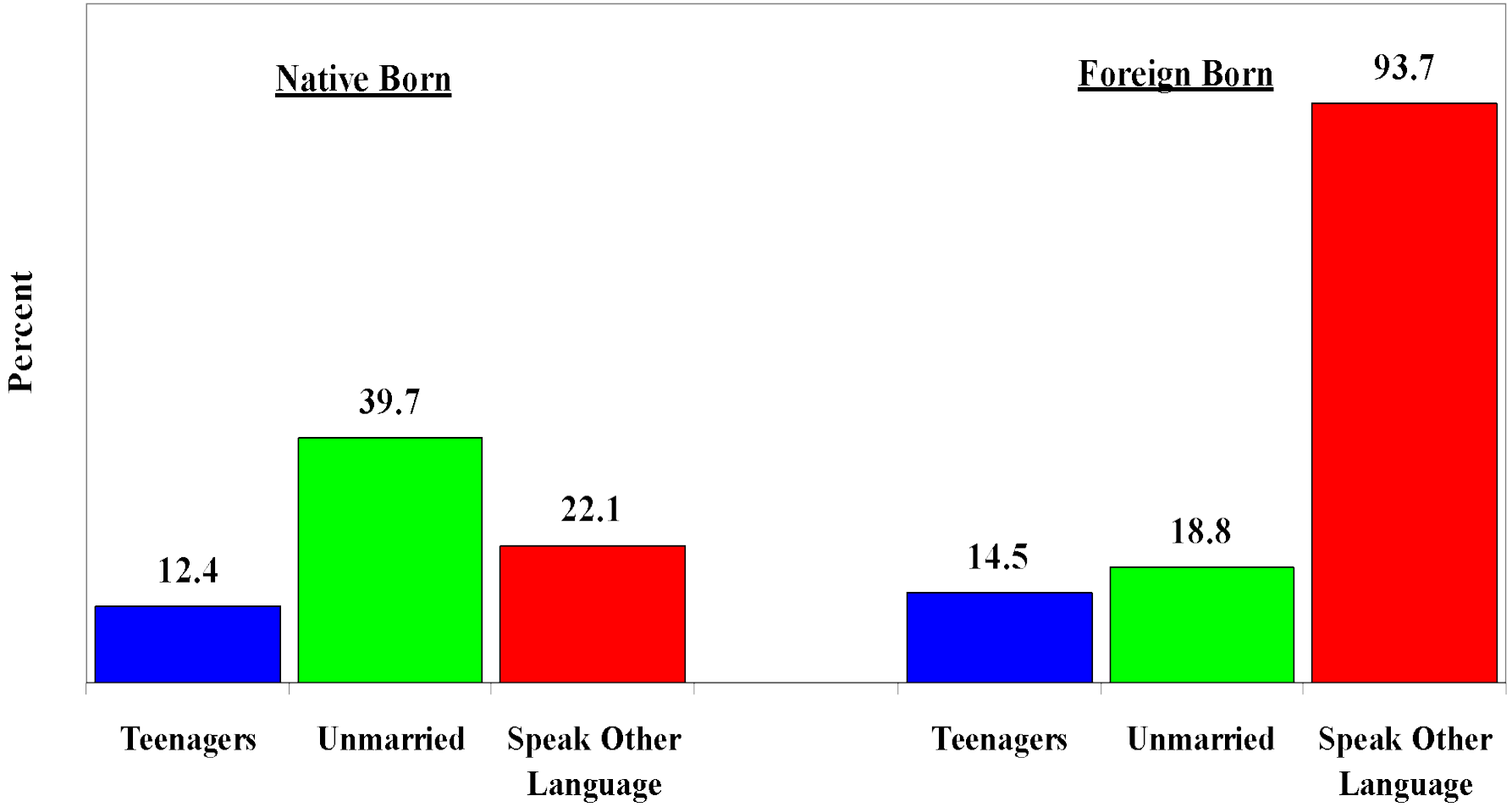


Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 1999 American Community Survey, 2000.

Risk factors: Harris County, Texas

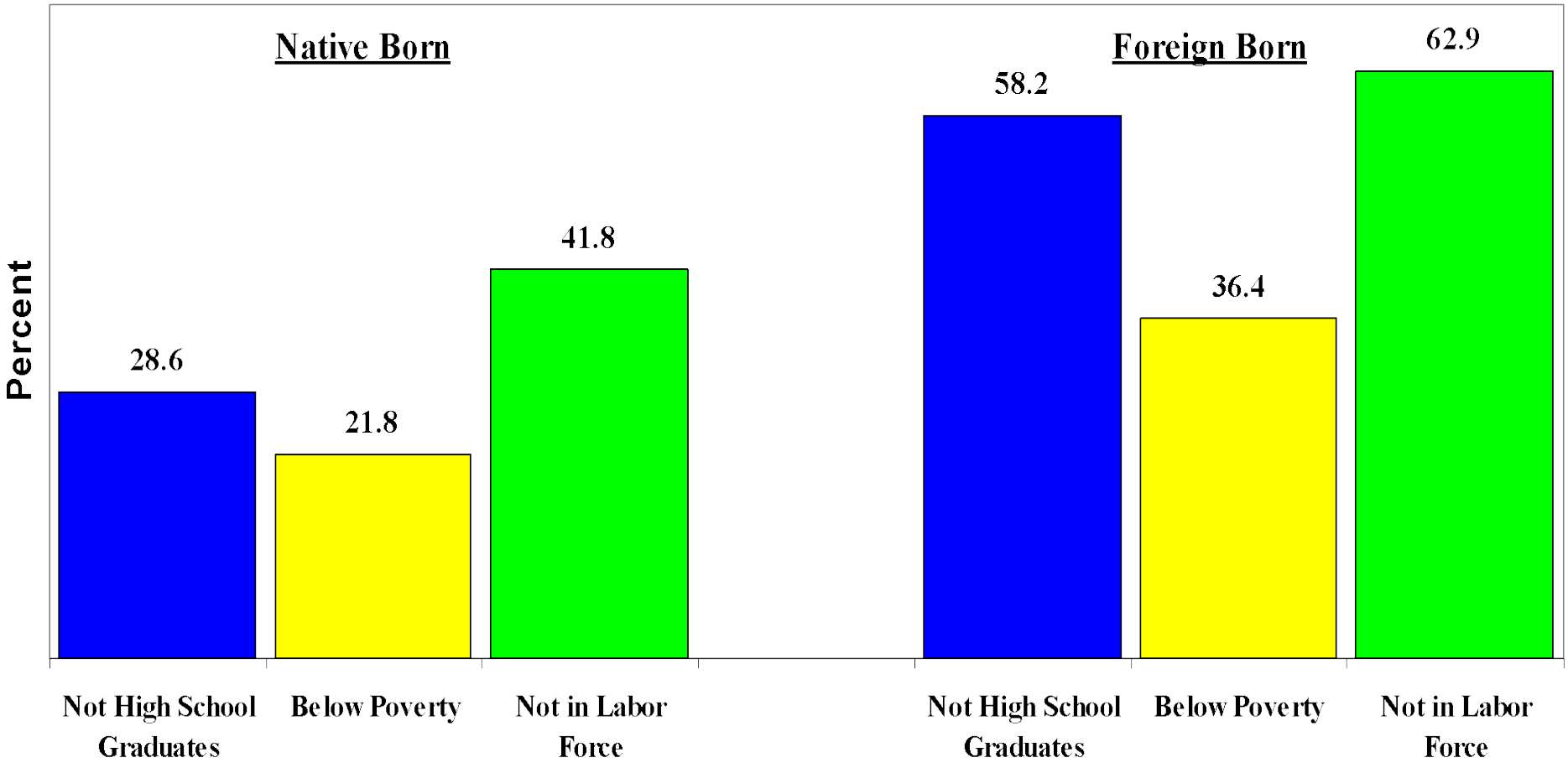
- What risk factors were foreign born and native mothers with newborns exposed to?
  - Almost all foreign born women with a recent birth in 1999 spoke a language other than English at home (Figure 10), suggesting that bilingual services may be in demand.
  - A relatively high proportion of native born mothers, on the other hand, were unmarried.
  - Teenage childbearing seems to be unrelated to nativity in this area. Regardless of nativity, more than one in ten of these mothers were teenagers.
  - More than half of foreign born mothers and 28.6 percent of native born mothers had not completed high school (Figure 11).
  - Foreign born mothers were more likely to be in poverty and less likely to be in the labor force than native born mothers.

Figure 10. Women with a Birth in the Past 12 Months by Selected Personal Characteristics and Nativity; Harris County, Texas: 1999



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 1999 American Community Survey, 2000.

Figure 11. Women with a Birth in the Past 12 Months by Selected Human Capital Characteristics and Nativity; Harris County, Texas: 1999



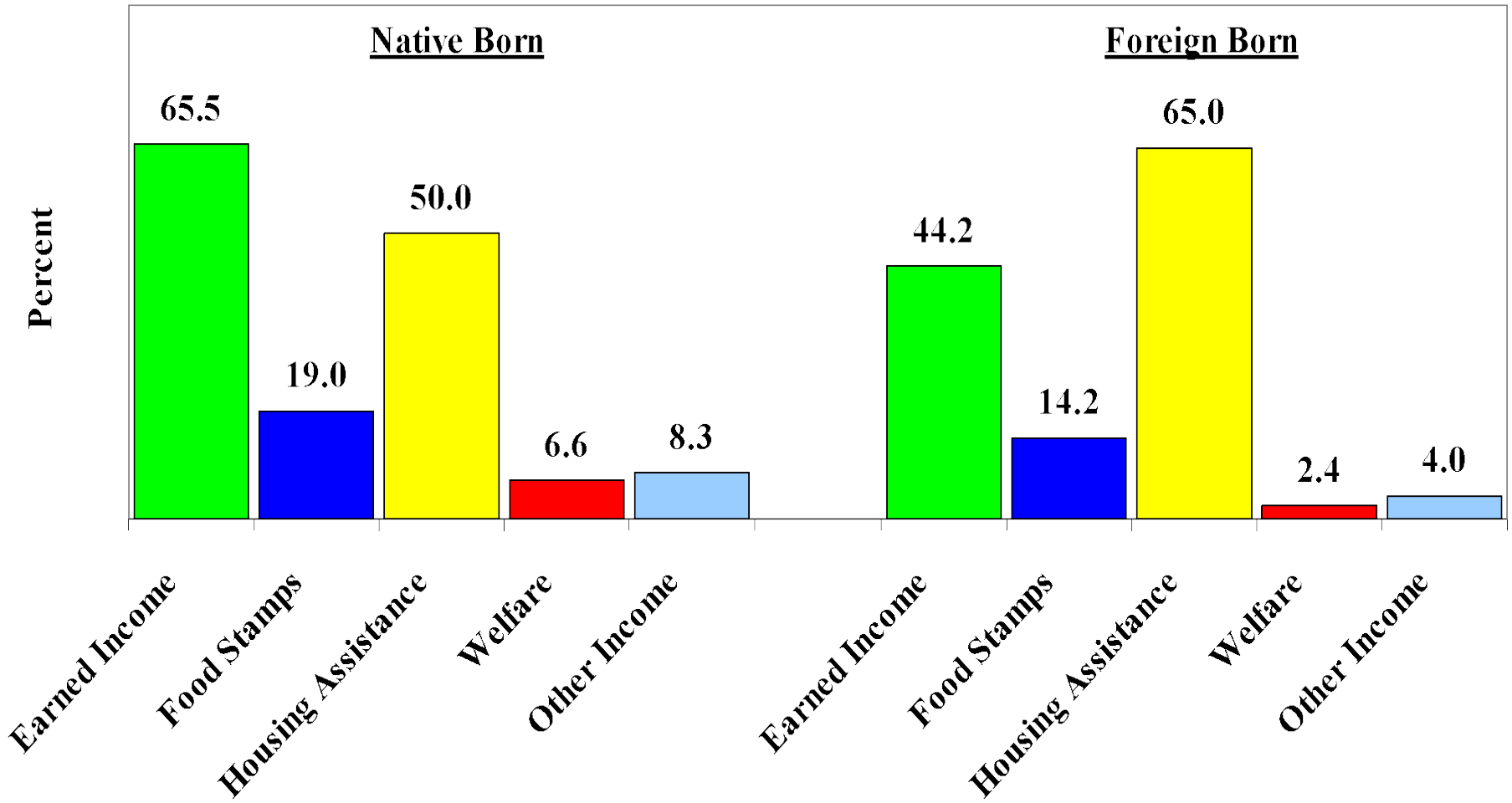
Note: Those who did not graduate high school may be 15-18 year old mothers who may receive a high school diploma in the future.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 1999 American Community Survey, 2000.

Available Resources: Harris County, Texas

- What economic resources are available to new mothers in Harris County, Texas?
  - A smaller proportion of foreign born mothers had earned income compared to native mothers (44.2 vs. 65.5 percent) (Figure 12).
  - Receipt of food stamps, welfare and other income (including child support) was also less likely among the foreign born compared to native born mothers. This could be partly due to language difficulties.
  - Foreign born mothers, however, were more likely to receive housing assistance than native born mothers (65.0 vs. 50.0 percent). This difference could be due to the tendency of immigrants to move to neighborhoods or households already established by prior immigrants from the same region of origin.

Figure 12. Women with a Birth in the Past 12 Months by Receipt of Economic Resources and Nativity; Harris County, Texas: 1999



Note: Earned income includes wages, salaries and self employment income. Housing assistance includes public housing and housing subsidies. Other income includes child support.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 1999 American Community Survey, 2000.

Conclusions

- ACS provides an important and accurate source of information about special populations in local areas.
- Local governments and social service organizations could use the ACS to determine the needs of their citizens and to target help, how and where it is needed.
- In 2001, ACS data will be available for all counties with populations of 65,000 or more.

AMERICAN COMMUNITY SURVEY

U.S. CENSUS BUREAU

A Useful Tool

- The ACS is capable of providing focused, standardized reports on a wide variety of topics of interest.
- These data can be used to analyze topics across geography, time and subpopulations for in-depth understanding.
- For more information about the ACS go to: www.census.gov/acs/www/index_main.