Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic began in March 2020. This poster explores patterns in births throughout 2020 and 2021, with a focus on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic at the national and state levels by a variety of demographic characteristics.

Data

Birth certificate data are available from the Center for Disease Control and Prevention’s Wonder database through 2020. Here, we look at births by month, mother’s age, Hispanic origin, and education from 2006-2020. Births by mother’s nativity and race are only available from 2016-2020. Provisional monthly birth counts by state through September 2021 are available from the CDC’s National Vital Statistics System.

National Overview: Dip and Rebound

During the COVID-19 pandemic, there were fewer births each year relative to the previous year. Births in the U.S. have been broadly declining. In general, there are fewer births each year than the last. In 2020, however, births declined more than usual. The chart shows the change in births per day by month from January 2020 to January 2021.

Births per month:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>2018-19</th>
<th>2019-20</th>
<th>2020-21</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>January</td>
<td>316,044</td>
<td>304,237</td>
<td>301,457</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February</td>
<td>10,152</td>
<td>9,999</td>
<td>9,745</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March</td>
<td>314,808</td>
<td>310,872</td>
<td>304,683</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April</td>
<td>315,137</td>
<td>310,372</td>
<td>304,683</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May</td>
<td>320,622</td>
<td>316,386</td>
<td>301,313</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June</td>
<td>315,137</td>
<td>310,372</td>
<td>304,683</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July</td>
<td>322,772</td>
<td>325,781</td>
<td>311,224</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August</td>
<td>325,781</td>
<td>312,587</td>
<td>308,513</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September</td>
<td>328,237</td>
<td>325,281</td>
<td>311,924</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October</td>
<td>328,237</td>
<td>325,281</td>
<td>311,924</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November</td>
<td>328,237</td>
<td>325,281</td>
<td>311,924</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>328,237</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The earliest we would expect to see a change in births would be December 2020—9 months after the pandemic began. While births in December of 2020 and January 2021 were dramatically lower than the previous year. The decline in births in 2020 was disproportionately driven by births to foreign-born women. Although foreign-born women are a small part of the U.S. population, foreign-born women comprised about half of the national decline in births in December of 2020. This may partially explain the decreases in births in the summer of 2020. The decline in births was likely driven by a decline in foreign-born women as well as a decline in births to Asian women.

An uneven dip by age:

Although births to women aged 20-24 and 25-29 years of age were reduced, births to women aged 40 and older were not. Births to women aged 40 and older increased in the summer of 2020.

An uneven dip by nativity:

Births to foreign-born women and Asian women decreased more than births to native-born women. Births to native-born women only declined slightly over 2020.

Florida: Births to foreign-born women declined more than births to native-born women. Births to foreign-born women made up most of the decline.

New York and California: Births to foreign-born women only declined slightly over 2020.

Texas: Births to foreign-born women only declined slightly over 2020.

States: An Uneven Dip

California, Florida, and Texas are the states with the largest number of births to foreign-born women. Birth patterns in these states differed greatly by nativity during the pandemic.

Provisional monthly birth counts by state through September 2021 are available from the CDC’s National Vital Statistics System. Birth certificate data can reflect short-term fluctuations in births much more accurately than traditional population measures which can reflect short-term fluctuations in the population. This poster analyzes the birth data as of September 2021.

National Level: Dip and Rebound

An uneven dip by age:

In general, the decline in births in the U.S. is occurring among younger women while births to women at older ages are increasing. In the decade of 2009-2019, births to women in their 20s decreased while births to women aged 20-24 increased. During 2020, however, births declined to women of all age groups. Births to women in their 30s reversed their increase and births to women aged 40+ had dramatic decreases.

An uneven dip by nativity:

The decline in births in 2020 was disproportionately driven by births to Asian woman. The number of births to Asian woman in December of 2020 was 18% lower than the number of births to Asian woman in December of 2019.

An uneven dip by race:

The decline in births in 2020 was disproportionately driven by births to foreign-born women. Although foreign-born men and women make up only about 14% of the U.S. population, foreign-born women comprised about half of the national decline in births in December of 2020. This may partially explain the decrease in births in the summer of 2020. The decline in births was likely driven by a decline in foreign-born women as well as a decline in births to Asian women.

An uneven dip by nativity and race:

Among foreign-born women, foreign-born Asian women had the largest proportional decline. Births to foreign-born Asian woman in December of 2020 were 22% lower than the average annual number of births between 2017 and 2019. In contrast, births to native-born Asian women were only 4% lower in December of 2020.

States: An Uneven Dip by Nativity

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An uneven dip by age:

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An uneven dip by race:

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States: An Uneven Rebound

Baby boom: minimal decline and substantial increase

Several states had minimal declines in 2020, but notable increases in 2021. These states include Arizona, Colorado, Connecticut, Idaho, Maine, New Hampshire, South Carolina, and Tennessee.

Decline and no rebound

Most states falling in this category. Births were anomalously low in 2020 relative to 2019 but there were more births in the summer of 2021 than in the summer of 2020.

Rebounders: large declines and substantial recovery

Several states had notable declines, and by the summer of 2021 their births still had not consistently returned to normal rates. These states include Illinois, Mississippi, Missouri, and New Mexico.

This poster is released to inform interested parties of ongoing research and to encourage discussion. Any views expressed are those of the authors and not necessarily those of the U.S. Census Bureau.

Pandemic Births: Dip and Rebound in the United States

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