

Maternal and Child Health Report

Focus on Hamilton County Women and Children

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Non-marital Childbearing in Hamilton County 1997-1998

This issue of the Maternal and Child Health Report reports information on non-marital childbearing in Hamilton County. These data are provided by year and by county neighborhood. This newsletter also provides information on non-marital childbearing trends in the United States.

Non-marital Childbearing in the U.S.

A recent report from the National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS) examined non-marital childbearing over the time period 1940-1999 and found that the percent of births to unmarried women increased from 1940-1990 and then began to level out in the mid 1990s.¹

From 1940 to 1994, the percent of births to single mothers rose almost every year, from 3.8 percent in 1940 to 32.6 percent in 1994. The NCHS reports that from 1994-1999 there was little change in non-marital childbearing.²

In the 1990s, the percent of births to unmarried women increased from 28.0 percent in 1990 to 33.0 in 1999, and most of the increase was from 1990-1994. Since 1994, the percent of births to unmarried women has remained fairly stable at around 32-33 percent.³

According to the NCHS, there were two main factors causing this trend 1) the rising number of non-marital births, and 2) the rising number of unmarried women of childbearing age. They found that it was a combination of more actual births plus more unmarried women in the population.⁴ The NCHS emphasizes the importance of population changes in accounting for changes in non-marital births, "The numbers of women in the childbearing ages (15-44 years) increased substantially from the 1960s until the early 1980s, reflecting the impact of the baby boom generation."⁵

Additionally, the NCHS reports that another factor that has potentially impacted non-marital childbearing has been the increase (since the 1960s)

in the number of both men and women who postpone marriage.⁶

The NCHS explains the stabilization of non-marital childbearing in the late 1990s as a combination of off-setting factors. While the number of unmarried women of childbearing age continues to rise, birth rates for unmarried women continue to decrease, while birth rates for married women have increased.⁷

Non-marital Childbearing differs by Race/ Ethnicity*

The NCHS reports that the rate of nonmarital childbearing varies considerably by race and ethnicity.⁸ Non-marital birth rates have traditionally been higher for black women than white women, though the difference has narrowed in recent years due to steeper increases in non-marital childbearing of white women. For example, in the 1970s, the non-marital childbearing rate for black women was seven times that of white women, by 1992, it had decreased to double.⁹

Non-Marital Childbearing in Hamilton County

Table 1 and Figure 1 (page 3) show non-marital childbearing in Hamilton County for the years 1990-1998.

As Table 1 shows, the total number of births in the county decreased slightly each year between 1990 and 1998, while the number of births to unmarried mothers increased each year from, 1990 to 1993. The percent of births to unmarried mothers increased from just over 33 percent in 1990 to 35 percent in 1991 and again to 37 percent in 1992.

For the years 1993-1996, non-marital childbearing remained around 38 percent and peaked in 1997 to 38.7 percent. In 1998, the percent of births to unmarried mothers decreased somewhat to 37.6 percent.

In comparison to national figures, Hamilton County's percentage of non-marital childbearing appears to be somewhat higher than the national average. In terms of time trends, data on non-marital

childbearing in Hamilton County before 1990 were not available at the time of this report. For the 1990s, the trends appear to be somewhat similar with non-marital childbearing increasing in the early 1990s and then beginning to taper off.

As with other neighborhood social and health characteristics, non-marital childbearing differs widely by Hamilton County neighborhood.

Table 2 (page 4) shows the percent of total births which were to unmarried mothers for the years 1997 and 1998 combined. As Table 2 illustrates, although the county average is around 38 percent for the 1997-1998, several neighborhoods such as Mt. Lookout, Terrace Park, Montgomery, Indian Hill, and Hyde Park each have less than six percent of births to unmarried mothers.

Conversely, in Fay Apartments, South Cummins/ Millvale, and Over-the-Rhine, over 90 percent of all births are to unmarried mothers.

Policy implications

Several studies, including WCHOP's studies of Hamilton County births, have found a relationship between suboptimal birth outcomes and being unmarried. These include significantly increased rates of prematurity and low birth weight.

NCHS researchers assert that "out-of-wedlock childbearing increased dramatically" from 1940 to 1990 before leveling off during the 1990s.¹⁰

The NCHS discusses several factors that have impacted those trends, including population changes, marriage postponement, teenage births, contraception, and abortion/adoption rates.

Though only a small percentage of all births in the U.S. are to teenagers, the vast majority of teenage births are non-marital births. In the 1990s, the teenage birth rate has dropped substantially. According to the NCHS, teenage births peaked around 1991 and have been decreasing since then.

Also, the NCHS found that repeat teen births in the U.S. decreased by 20 percent from 1990 to 1996 and appear to have stabilized. They discovered that declines in the teenage birth rate have contributed to the decreases of non-marital births in the U.S. over the past decade.

Similarly illustrating that the changes in non-marital births are due to a decrease in pregnancies, the abortion rate has decreased from 1980 to 1995, according to the NCHS.

The NCHS reports that adoption rates have changed as well. While this does not affect the non-

marital birth rate, they do suggest that it impacts family structure by decreasing the number of families headed by unmarried females. The adoption rate for white unmarried women decreased from the 70s to the 80s, while the adoption rate for black women has and continues to be low.

While national studies showed the percentage of young women who are sexually active remained stable in the 1980s and 90s, the percentage of women using contraceptives increased somewhat. However, one national study showed that the percentage of teenage girls who were sexually active leveled off or decreased somewhat in the 1990s.

¹⁻¹⁰ Ventura, S.J, Bachrach, C.A. (2000) "Nonmarital Childbearing in the United States, 1940-1999." National Vital Statistics Reports. 48(16). Hyattsville, MD: National Center for Health Statistics.

* Note: Until the 1990s, rates for white women included births to both Hispanic and non-Hispanic white women. Rates have been computed separately for Hispanic women since 1990 and non-Hispanic women since 1994.



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Table 1 - Non-Marital Childbearing in Hamilton County by Year

Year	Total Births	Number and Percent of Births to Unmarried Mothers	
1990	13758	4606	33.5 %
1991	13628	4829	35.4 %
1992	13030	4868	37.4 %
1993	12983	4971	38.3 %
1994	12391	4696	37.9 %
1995	12080	4595	38.0 %
1996	11855	4515	38.1 %
1997	11532	4466	38.7 %
1998	11457	4310	37.6 %

Figure 1

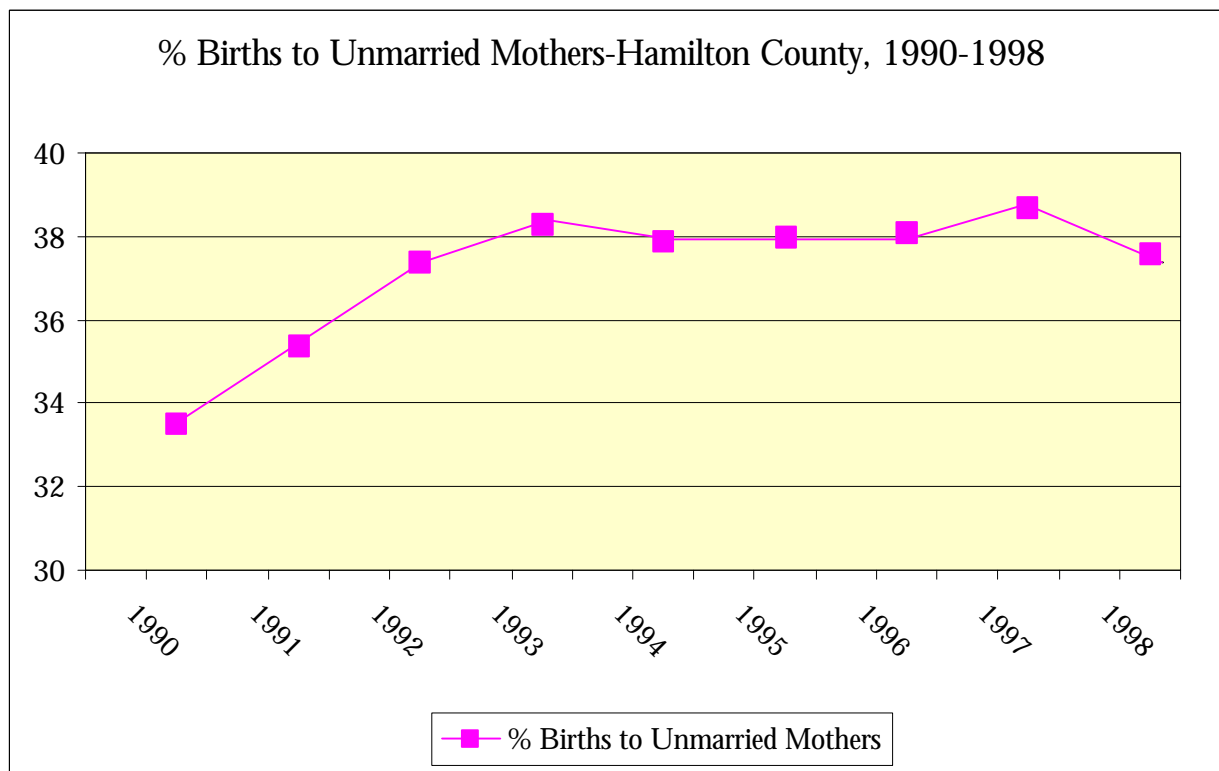


Table 2 Non-Marital Childbearing by Hamilton County Neighborhood, (1997 and 1998 combined)

Neighborhood	Non-Marital Births (%)	Neighborhood	Non-Marital Births (%)
Fay Apartments	93.2	Forest Park	33.6
S. Cumminsville	92.7	Springfield Township	32.5
Over The Rhine	91.1	Hartwell	31.9
Winton Hills	89.5	W. Price Hill	31.3
West End	88.2	Reading	30.9
Avondale	84.7	St. Bernard	30.5
N. Fairmount-English Woods	84.4	North College Hill	30.1
Walnut Hills	82.2	Crosby Township	29.7
Evanston	81.3	Harrison Township	28.8
Lincoln Heights	80.3	Arlington Heights	28.6
Bond Hill	75.4	Pleasant Ridge	28.3
Corryville	74.4	Springdale	28.2
Mt. Auburn	74.1	Oakley	27.4
Camp Washington	73.8	Harrison	25.2
Queensgate	71.4	Cheviot	24.1
Lower Price Hill	71.2	Cleves	22.9
Linwood	67.7	Colerain Township	22.6
Winton Place	67.4	California	22.2
South Fairmount	66.4	Fairfax	21.6
Northside	64.8	Clifton	20.0
Sedamsville-Riverside	62.7	Mt. Washington	19.2
E. Price Hill	62.4	Loveland	19.1
Elmwood Place	60.3	Glendale	18.6
Roselawn	59.3	Mt. Lookout-Columb. Tusc.	17.5
Madisonville	58.0	Delhi Township	17.0
East End	57.7	Sharonville	16.2
Kennedy Heights	55.3	Deer Park	15.4
Fairview-Clifton Hts.	55.2	North Bend	15.2
Riverside-Sayler Park	54.5	Sycamore Township	15.0
Evanston-E.Walnut Hills	52.2	Mt. Adams	14.3
N. Avondale-Paddock Hills	51.9	Newtown	13.8
Woodlawn	50.9	Miami Township	13.6
Mt. Airy	47.4	Greenhills	13.5
Sayler Park	47.0	Green Township	13.3
CBD-Riverfront	45.8	Symmes Township	10.7
Westwood	44.8	Blue Ash	9.5
College Hill	44.7	Madeira	9.0
Addyston	42.9	Wyoming	9.0
Carthage	41.6	Anderson Township	7.9
Silverton	41.5	Evendale Village	7.1
Norwood	40.9	Mariemont	6.8
Lockland	40.7	Amberley Village	6.3
Mount Healthy	40.4	Hyde Park	5.6
E. Walnut Hills	39.7	Indian Hill	4.2
Golf Manor	35.6	Montgomery	2.6
Columbia Township	35.1	Terrace Park	2.2
University Heights	34.8	Mt. Lookout	1.4
Whitewater Township	34.0		