

## Birth and Fertility Rates

### Headline

Fertility rates fell dramatically between 1960 and 1980, from 118 to 68 births per 1,000 women ages 15 to 44. The fertility rate has stayed fairly steady since then, and was 65 per 1,000 in 2002. ([See Figure 1](#))

### Importance

Tracking trends in fertility and birth rates is critical for effective social planning to ensure there will be adequate age-appropriate resources to accommodate changes in population composition. Sustained high fertility rates create large populations of young dependents, putting an immediate burden on society in terms of supporting young children, providing an adequate number of schools, and ensuring that affordable child care exists.<sup>1</sup> For example, during the Baby Boom period (1946-1964), the unanticipated period of high fertility rates caught communities unprepared and without the school facilities needed to accommodate the rapidly increasing numbers of school-age children. On the other hand, sustained low fertility rates lead to a rapidly aging population and, in the long-run, place a burden on the economy and the Social Security system because a smaller pool of younger workers must support a comparatively larger, dependent elderly population.<sup>2</sup>

Tracking age-specific and race/ethnicity-specific trends in fertility and birth rates provides information on the divergent needs of different population groups. For example, highlighting the very high teen birth rates among Hispanics has alerted pregnancy prevention coalitions to anticipate the needs of this quickly-growing population.<sup>3</sup>

### Trends

Fertility rates in the United States declined sharply between the Baby Boom years of the 1950s and 1960s and 1980 (from 118 births per 1,000 women in 1960 to 68 births per 1,000 women in 1980). Since 1980, however, fertility rates have been relatively stable, remaining somewhere in between 64 and 71 births per 1,000 women. ([See Figure 1](#))

Within the past two decades, fertility rates have declined substantially among non-Hispanic blacks (from 91 births per 1,000 women in 1980 to 69 births per 1,000 women in 2001, the most recent year for which these data are available) and modestly among non-Hispanic whites (from 62 births per 1,000 women in 1980 to 58 births per 1,000 women in 2001). Fertility rates among Hispanics, however, have not followed this downward trend (95 births per 1,000 women in 1980 and 96 births per 1,000 women in 2001). ([See Table 1](#))

While age-specific birth rates have increased among women over age 30 (from 62 per 1,000 women ages 30 to 34 in 1980 to 92 per 1,000 women in 2002, for example), they have decreased among women under age 25 (from 115 per 1,000 women ages 20 to 24 in

1980 to 104 per 1,000 women in 2002). Declines have been particularly large among teens ages 15 to 19 (from 89 per 1,000 women in 1960 to 43 per 1,000 women in 2002). ([See Table 1](#))

### **Differences by Age**

Women in the middle of their childbearing years have the highest birth rates. Specifically, birth rates are the highest for women ages 25 to 29 (at 114 births per 1,000 in 2002) followed by women ages 20 to 24 (at 104 births per 1,000) and women ages 30 to 34 (at 92 births per 1,000). Women ages 15 to 19 and 35 to 39 had similar rates in 2002, at approximately 42 births per 1,000. Women over 45 and women younger than 15 had rates below 1 birth per 1,000 in 2002. ([See Figure 2](#))

### **Differences by Race and Ethnicity**

Hispanic women have the highest fertility rates, followed by non-Hispanic blacks. Fertility rates for Hispanic women are approximately 40 percent higher than those for non-Hispanic blacks, and more than 45 percent higher than those for women in all other racial and ethnic groups. In 2001, the fertility rate for Hispanic women was 96 births per 1,000, while the fertility rate for blacks was 68 births per 1,000. Non-Hispanic whites and American Indians/Alaska Natives have the lowest fertility rates, at 58 births per 1,000 women. ([See Figure 3](#))

### **State and Local Estimates**

Final birth and fertility rates for 2001 are available by state from *Revised Birth and Fertility Rates for the 1990s and New Rates for Hispanic Populations, 2000 and 2001: United States*. National Vital Statistics Reports, Vol. 51, No. 12. [http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/nvsr/nvsr51/nvsr51\\_12.pdf](http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/nvsr/nvsr51/nvsr51_12.pdf) (See Table 10).

Preliminary birth and fertility rates for 2001 are available by state from *Births: Preliminary data for 2002*. National Vital Statistics Reports, Vol. 51, No. 11. [http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/nvsr/nvsr51/nvsr51\\_11.pdf](http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/nvsr/nvsr51/nvsr51_11.pdf) (See Table 11).

### **International Estimates**

International crude birth rates and total fertility rates\* are available from *2003 World Population Data Sheet of the Population Reference Bureau*. (2003). Washington, DC: Population Reference Bureau. Available online at [http://www.prb.org/pdf/WorldPopulationDS03\\_Eng.pdf](http://www.prb.org/pdf/WorldPopulationDS03_Eng.pdf).

\*Note: The definitions of crude birth rates and total fertility rates differ substantially from the birth rates and fertility rates referenced in this indicator. For this reason, these international estimates are not comparable to the estimates presented here. Crude birth rates are defined as births per 1,000 of the *total* population (including all ages, races, and both genders). Total fertility rates are defined as the average number of children a woman

would have if the current age-specific birth rates did not change during her childbearing years (usually between ages 15-49). For more details about these definitions, please see the publication listed above.

### **National Goals**

None available

### **Definition**

The general *fertility rate* is defined as the total number of births per 1,000 women aged 15 to 44 years. *Birth rates* are different from fertility rates in that the denominator is not all women aged 15 to 44. Instead, if you look at a particular age group, it can be referred to as a birth rate.

For more information about these definitions, please see:

Hamilton BE, Martin JA, Sutton PD. *Births: Preliminary Data for 2002*. National vital statistics reports; vol 51 no 11. Hyattsville, Maryland: National Center for Health Statistics. 2003.

[http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/nvsr/nvsr51/nvsr51\\_11.pdf](http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/nvsr/nvsr51/nvsr51_11.pdf)

### **Data Source**

Data for 2002 from: Hamilton BE, Martin JA, Sutton PD. *Births: Preliminary Data for 2002*. National vital statistics reports; vol 51 no 11. Hyattsville, Maryland: National Center for Health Statistics. 2003. Table 1.

[http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/nvsr/nvsr51/nvsr51\\_11.pdf](http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/nvsr/nvsr51/nvsr51_11.pdf)

Data for 1990 through 2001 from: Hamilton BE, Sutton PD, Ventura SJ. *Revised birth and fertility rates for the 1990s and new rates for Hispanic populations, 2000 and 2001: United States*. National vital statistics reports; vol 51 no 12. Hyattsville, Maryland: National Center for Health Statistics. 2003. Tables 1 and 2.

[http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/nvsr/nvsr51/nvsr51\\_12.pdf](http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/nvsr/nvsr51/nvsr51_12.pdf)

Data for 1950 through 1985 from: National Center for Health Statistics. *Health, United States, 2002. With Chartbook on Trends in the Health of Americans*. Hyattsville, Maryland: 2002. Table 3.

<http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/hus.htm>

### **Raw Data Source**

National Vital Statistics System birth data at <http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/births.htm>

### **Next Update**

December 2003

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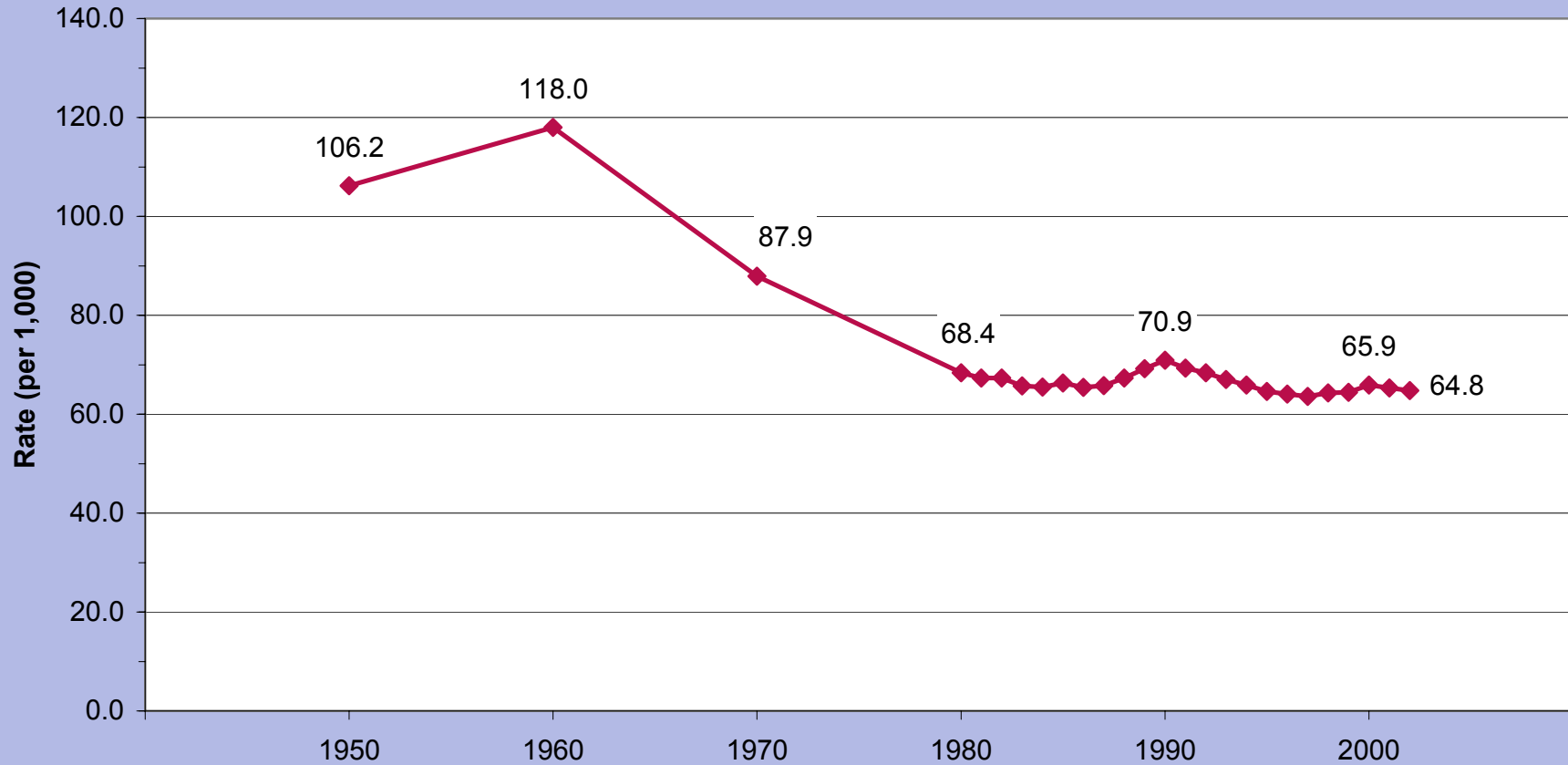
<sup>1</sup> Coale, Ansley J. 1987. "How a Population Ages or Grows Younger." Pp. 365-369 in S.W. Menard and E.W. Moen (eds.), *Perspectives on Population: An Introduction to Concepts and Issues*. Oxford: Oxford University Press; Weeks, John R. 2002. *Population: An Introduction to Concepts and Issues* (8<sup>th</sup> edition). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing Company.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> *Hispanic Research Project* (2000). National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy and The Bravo Group. Retrieved August 27, 2003, from the World Wide Web:  
<http://www.teenpregnancy.org/resources/reading/ppt/hisp.ppt>.

Figure 1

### Trends in the General Fertility Rate (per 1,000), Selected Years 1950-2002<sup>1</sup>



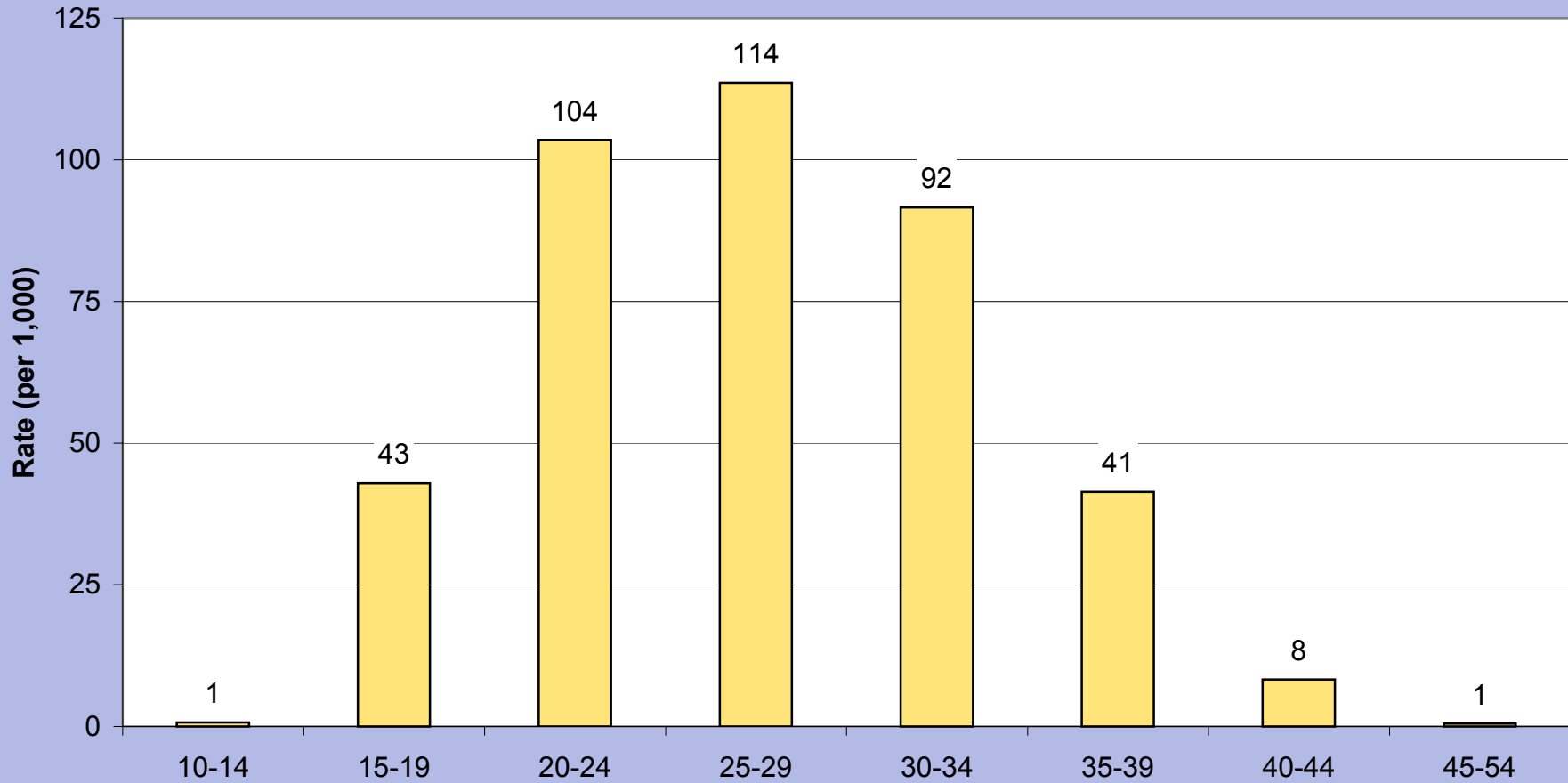
<sup>1</sup>Data for 2002 are preliminary

Source: Data for 1950 through 1989 from: National Center for Health Statistics. *Health, United States, 2002. With Chartbook on Trends in the Health of Americans*. Hyattsville, Maryland: 2002. Table 3. Data for 1990 through 2001 from: Hamilton BE, Sutton PD, Ventura SJ. Revised birth and fertility rates for the 1990s and new rates for Hispanic populations, 2000 and 2001: United States. *National vital statistics reports*; vol 51 no 12. Hyattsville, Maryland: National Center for Health Statistics. 2003. Tables 1 and 2. Data for 2002 from: Hamilton BE, Martin JA, Sutton PD. Births: Preliminary Data for 2002. *National vital statistics reports*; vol 51 no 11. Hyattsville, Maryland: National Center for Health Statistics. 2003. Table 1.



Figure 2

### Birth Rate (per 1,000) by Age, 2002<sup>1</sup>



<sup>1</sup>Data for 2002 are preliminary. Birth rates are defined as the total number of births per 1,000 women in each age group.

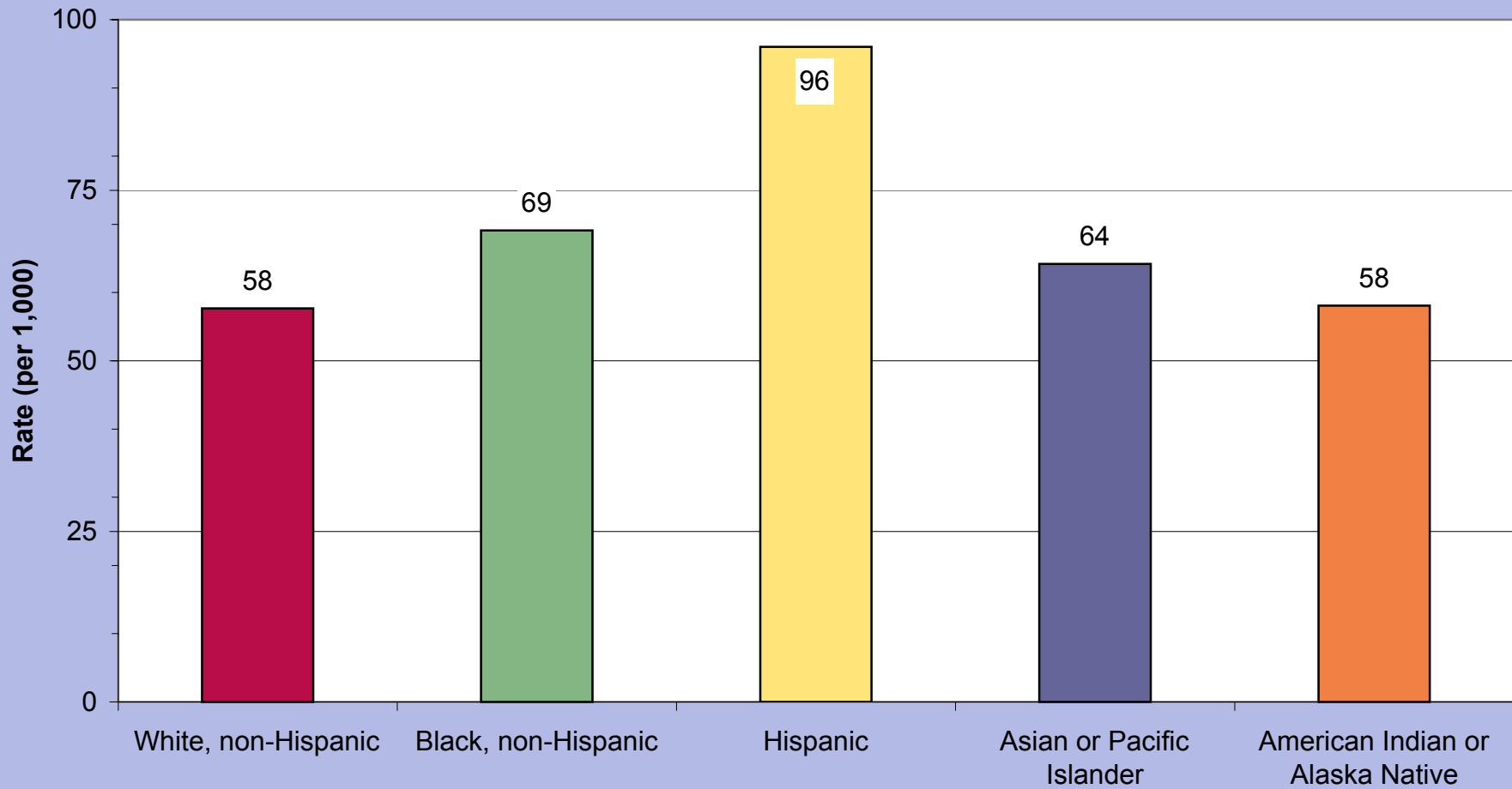
Note: Data for Hispanics includes all persons of Hispanic origin of any race.

Source: Hamilton BE, Martin JA, Sutton PD. Births: Preliminary Data for 2002. *National vital statistics reports*; vol 51 no 11.

Hyattsville, Maryland: National Center for Health Statistics. 2003. Table 1.

Figure 3

### Fertility Rates (per 1,000) by Race and Ethnicity, 2001



Note: Data for Hispanics includes all persons of Hispanic origin of any race. In this case, fertility rates are defined as the total number of births per 1,000 women ages 15-44 in each racial/ethnic subgroup.

Source: Revised birth and fertility rates for the 1990s and new rates for Hispanic populations, 2000 and 2001: United States. *National vital statistics reports*; vol 51 no 12. Hyattsville, Marland: National Center for Health Statistics. 2003. Tables 1 and 2.



Table 1

**Fertility Rates<sup>1</sup> (per 1,000 Women) by Race and Ethnicity and and Birth Rates<sup>1</sup> by Age, Selected Years 1950-2002**

	1950	1960	1970	1980 <sup>2</sup>	1985	1990	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002 <sup>4</sup>
<b>Total</b>	106.2	118.0	87.9	68.4	66.3	70.9	64.6	64.1	63.6	64.3	64.4	65.9	65.3	64.8
<b>Race/Ethnicity</b>														
<b>White</b>	102.3	113.2	84.1	65.6	64.1	68.3	62.6	63.3	62.8	63.6	64.0	65.3	65.0	-
<b>White, non-Hispanic</b>	-	-	-	62.4	-	62.8	57.5	57.1	56.8	57.6	57.7	58.5	57.7	-
<b>Black</b>	-	153.5	115.4	84.9	78.8	86.8	71.0	69.2	69.0	69.4	64.5	76.0	67.6	-
<b>Black, non-Hispanic</b>	-	-	-	90.7	-	89.0	72.8	70.7	70.3	70.9	69.9	71.4	69.1	-
<b>Hispanic<sup>3</sup></b>	-	-	-	95.4	-	107.7	98.8	97.5	94.2	93.2	93.0	95.9	96.0	-
<b>Mexican</b>	-	-	-	-	-	118.9	109.9	110.7	106.6	103.2	101.5	105.1	105.7	-
<b>Puerto Rican</b>	-	-	-	-	-	82.9	71.3	66.5	65.8	69.7	71.1	73.5	72.2	-
<b>Cuban</b>	-	-	-	-	-	52.6	52.2	55.1	53.1	46.5	47.0	49.3	56.7	-
<b>Asian or Pacific Islander</b>	-	-	-	73.2	68.4	69.6	62.6	62.3	61.3	60.1	60.9	65.8	64.2	-
<b>American Indian or Alaska Native</b>	-	-	-	82.7	78.6	76.2	63.0	61.8	60.8	61.3	59.0	58.7	58.1	-
<b>Age</b>														
<b>10-14</b>	1.0	0.8	1.2	1.1	1.2	1.4	1.3	1.2	1.1	1.0	0.9	0.9	0.8	0.7
<b>15-19</b>	81.6	89.1	68.3	53.0	51.0	59.9	56.0	53.5	51.3	50.3	48.8	47.7	45.3	42.9
<b>20-24</b>	196.6	258.1	167.8	115.1	108.3	116.5	107.5	107.8	107.3	108.4	107.9	109.7	106.2	103.5
<b>25-29</b>	166.1	197.4	145.1	112.9	111.0	120.2	108.8	108.6	108.3	110.2	111.2	113.5	113.4	113.6
<b>30-34</b>	103.7	112.7	73.3	61.9	69.1	80.8	81.1	82.1	83.0	85.2	87.1	91.2	91.9	91.6
<b>35-39</b>	52.9	56.2	31.7	19.8	24.0	31.7	34.0	34.9	35.7	36.9	37.8	39.7	40.6	41.4
<b>40-44</b>	15.1	15.5	8.1	3.9	4.0	5.5	6.6	6.8	7.1	7.4	7.4	8.0	8.1	8.3
<b>45-54</b>	1.2	0.9	0.5	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.3	0.3	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.5	0.5	0.5

Note: Data for 1995-2001 are based on revised population estimates derived from the 2000 Decennial Census.

<sup>1</sup>The total number includes births to women of all ages, 15-44 years. The rate shown for all ages is the general fertility rate, which is defined as the total number of births per 1,000 women aged 15-44 years. Age-specific birth rates are defined as the total number of births per 1,000 women in a specific age group (between ages 15 and 44).

<sup>2</sup>Data for estimates before 1980 are based on the race/ethnicity of the child, from 1980 on estimates are based on the race/ethnicity of the mother. Before 1980 data for the mother's marital status was estimated for the United States from data for registration areas in which marital status of mother was reported. For 1980 on, data for States in which the mother's marital status was not reported were inferred from other items on the birth certificate and included with data from the reporting States

<sup>3</sup>Includes all persons of Hispanic origin of any race.

<sup>4</sup>Data for 2002 are preliminary.

Sources: Data for 1950 through 1985 from: National Center for Health Statistics. *Health, United States, 2002. With Chartbook on Trends in the Health of Americans*. Hyattsville, Maryland: 2002. Table 3. Data for 1990 through 2001 from: Hamilton BE, Sutton PD, Ventura SJ. Revised birth and fertility rates for the 1990s and new rates for Hispanic populations, 2000 and 2001: United States. National vital statistics reports; vol 51 no 12. Hyattsville, Maryland: National Center for Health Statistics. 2003. Tables 1 and 2. Data for 2002 from: Hamilton BE, Martin JA, Sutton PD. Births: Preliminary Data for 2002. *National vital statistics reports*; vol 51 no 11. Hyattsville, Maryland: National Center for Health Statistics. 2003. Table 1.

