MATERNAL AGE

According to preliminary data, the general fertility rate fell slightly to 66.7 live births per 1,000 women aged 15–44 years in 2009 (from a rate of 68.6 in 2008). Birth rates for nearly every age and racial/ethnic group declined. The rate for teenagers aged 15–19 years decreased to 39.1 per 1,000 females in this age group, which continues the general decline in teenage birthrates since 1991, when the rate was 61.8 births per 1,000. Although the birth rate for women aged 25–29 years fell in 2009, this group still experienced the highest birth rate of all age groups (110.5 births per 1,000). Birth rates for women aged 35–39 years (46.6 births per 1,000) also declined slightly (from 46.9 in 2008), representing the second year of decline after increasing rates for three decades. Birth rates for women aged 40–44 years (10.1 births per 1,000) increased slightly over the previous year. Average age at first birth rose 3.6 years between 1970 and 2006 to 25.0 years (the latest year for which data are available; data not shown).

The age distribution of births varies by race/ethnicity. Among non-Hispanic Black, Hispanic, and American Indian/Alaska Native women, 16.5 percent, 13.8 percent, and 17.3 percent of births, respectively, were to females younger than 20 years of age, compared to 7.3 percent of births to non-Hispanic White females. The percentage of births to women aged 20–24 years was higher among non-Hispanic Black and Hispanic women (31.8 percent and 27.5 percent, respectively) than among non-Hispanic White women (22.2 percent). However, births to women aged 35 and older represented a higher proportion of births among non-Hispanic White and Asian/Pacific Islander women than among non-Hispanic Black and Hispanic women.

Distribution of Births, by Maternal Age and Race/Ethnicity, 2009*

Source (1.9): Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Health Statistics, National Vital Statistics System

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*Preliminary data. **May include Hispanics. †Separate estimates were not available for Asians and Native Hawaiians and Other Pacific Islanders.