

Birth and Fertility Rates

Headline

In 2005, for the third year in a row, birth rates for females ages 15 to 19 fell below rates for older women ages 35 to 39. ([See Figure 2](#)) The current rates contrast with those of 1990 and earlier years, in which birth rates among teens were nearly twice that of women in the older age group. ([See Table 1](#))

Importance

Tracking trends in fertility and birth rates helps support effective social planning and the allocation of basic resources across generations. Sustained high fertility rates create large populations of young dependents, creating demand for supports for young children, for an adequate number of schools, and for affordable child care.¹ For example, during the Baby Boom period (1946-1964), unanticipated high fertility rates caught communities unprepared and without the school facilities needed to accommodate rapidly increasing numbers of school-age children. On the other hand, sustained low fertility rates can lead to a rapidly aging population and, in the long-run, may place a burden on the economy and the Social Security system because the pool of younger workers responsible for supporting the dependent elderly population is, when excluding immigration, smaller, and the dependent elderly population is comparatively larger.²

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 adolescent pregnancy prevention coalitions to anticipate the needs of this quickly-growing population.³

Trends

Fertility rates in the United States declined sharply between the Baby Boom years of the 1950s and early 1960s and 1980 (from 118 births per 1,000 women aged 15 to 44 in 1960 to 68 births per 1,000 women in 1980). Since 1980, fertility rates have been relatively stable, remaining between 64 and 71 births per 1,000 women, although rates have increased slightly from 1997 to 2005 (from 64 births per 1,000 women to 67 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 aged 15 to 44 in 1980 to 67 per 1,000 in 2005)* and among American Indian and Alaska Native women (from 83 births per 1,000 to 60 births per 1,000 women between 1980 and 2005)*. Fertility rates also declined slightly overall among non-Hispanic whites (from 62 births per 1,000 women in 1980 to 58 births per 1,000 women in 2005)*. Fertility rates among Hispanics, however, increased from 95 births per 1,000 women in 1980 to 108 per 1,000 women in 1990

before declining to 93 per 1,000 in 1998*. The fertility rate has since slightly increased to 99 births per 1,000 Hispanic women in 2005*. ([See Table 1](#))

While age-specific birth rates have increased in recent decades among women over age 30 (for example, from 62 per 1,000 women ages 30 to 34 in 1980 to 96 per 1,000 women in 2005*), they have decreased among women under age 25 (from 115 per 1,000 women ages 20 to 24 in 1980 to 102 per 1,000 women in 2005*). The birth rate declined among teens ages 15 to 19 by more than half from 89 per 1,000 women in 1960 to 40 per 1,000 women in 2005.* ([See Table 1](#))

*Note: Data from 2005 are based on preliminary estimates. All estimates refer to rates per 1,000 women ages 15 to 44, unless otherwise specified.

Differences by Age

Women in the middle of their childbearing years have the highest birth rates. Specifically, women ages 25 to 29 have the highest birth rates (at 116 births per 1,000 in 2005) followed by women ages 20 to 24 (at 102 births per 1,000) and women ages 30 to 34 (at 96 births per 1,000)*. Beginning in 2003, women ages 35 to 39 had a slightly higher birth rate than did young women ages 15 to 19, representing a significant change from previous years. In 2005, the birth rate for women ages 35 to 39 was 46 births per 1,000, compared with 40 per 1,000 for young women ages 15 to 19. Birthrates for women over age 45 and under age 15 were below one birth per 1,000 in 2005*. ([See Figure 2](#))

*Note: Data from 2005 are based on preliminary estimates.

Differences by Race and Ethnicity

In 2005, Hispanic women had the highest fertility rates, followed by non-Hispanic black women, Asian women, Native American women, and non-Hispanic white women.* Fertility rates for Hispanic women were over 45 percent higher than those for non-Hispanic black women and Asian women (99 births per 1,000 for Hispanic women versus 67 births per 1,000 for non-Hispanic black and Asian women), and more than 65 percent higher than those for Native American women and non-Hispanic white women (60 and 58 births per 1,000 women, respectively). ([See Figure 3](#))

Among Hispanic women, in 2004 (the most recent year for which such estimates are available), Mexican woman had a much higher fertility rate than Puerto Rican and Cuban woman (107 births per 1,000 compared with 68 births per 1,000 and 53 births per 1,000, respectively). ([See Table 1](#))

*Note: Data from 2005 are based on preliminary estimates.

State and Local Estimates

State estimates for fertility rates and number of births by selected demographics

characteristics for 2004 are available from: Martin JA, Hamilton BE, Sutton PD, et al. (2006). "Births: Final data for 2004." *National Vital Statistics Reports*, 55(1). Hyattsville, MD: National Center for Health Statistics. Table 18. http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/nvsr/nvsr55/nvsr55_01.pdf (See Tables 11, 12, and 13).

Birth and fertility rates are available by state from *Trends in Characteristics of Births by State: United States, 1990, 1995, and 2000-2002*. National Vital Statistics Reports, Vol. 52, No. 19. http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/nvsr/nvsr52/nvsr52_19acc.pdf (See Table 3).

International Estimates

International crude birth rates and total fertility rates** are available from *2006 World Population Data Sheet of the Population Reference Bureau*. (2006). Washington, DC: Population Reference Bureau. Available online at <http://www.prb.org/pdf06/06WorldDataSheet.pdf>

**Note: The international 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.

International total fertility rates are also available from the United Nations Population Division and World Health Organization. Available online at <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic/sconcerns/natality/nat2.htm>

National Goals

None available

Definition

The *fertility rate* is defined by the National Center for Health Statistics as the total number of live births per 1,000 women aged 15 to 44 years. These rates are based on population estimates from the 2000 census. *Birth rates* are different from fertility rates in that the denominator is not all women aged 15 to 44, but rather a specific age group.

For more detailed information, please see Table 3 and the Technical Notes section of "Births: Final data for 2004" at http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/nvsr/nvsr55/nvsr55_01.pdf

Data Source

Preliminary Data for 2005: Hamilton BE, Martin JA, and Ventura SJ. (2006). "Births: Preliminary data for 2005." *National Vital Statistics Reports*; vol 55. Hyattsville, MD: National Center for Health Statistics. Tables 1, 5.

<http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/products/pubs/pubd/hestats/prelimbirths05/prelimbirths05.htm>

Data for 2004: Martin JA, Hamilton BE, Sutton PD, et al. (2006). "Births: Final data for 2004." *National Vital Statistics Reports*, 55(1). Hyattsville, MD: National Center for Health Statistics. Table 18. http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/nvsr/nvsr55/nvsr55_01.pdf

Data for 2003: Martin JA, Hamilton BE, Sutton PD, et al. (2005). "Births: Final data for 2003." *National Vital Statistics Reports*, 54(2). Hyattsville, MD: National Center for Health Statistics. http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/nvsr/nvsr54/nvsr54_02.pdf. (See Tables 9 and 13)

Data for 2002 from: Hamilton BE, Martin JA, Sutton PD, Ventura SJ, Menacker F, and Munson, ML. Births: Final Data for 2002. *National vital statistics reports*; vol 52 no 10. Hyattsville, Maryland: National Center for Health Statistics. 2003. Tables 3 and 6. http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/nvsr/nvsr52/nvsr52_10.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

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

Winter 2007

¹ 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* (8th edition). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing Company.

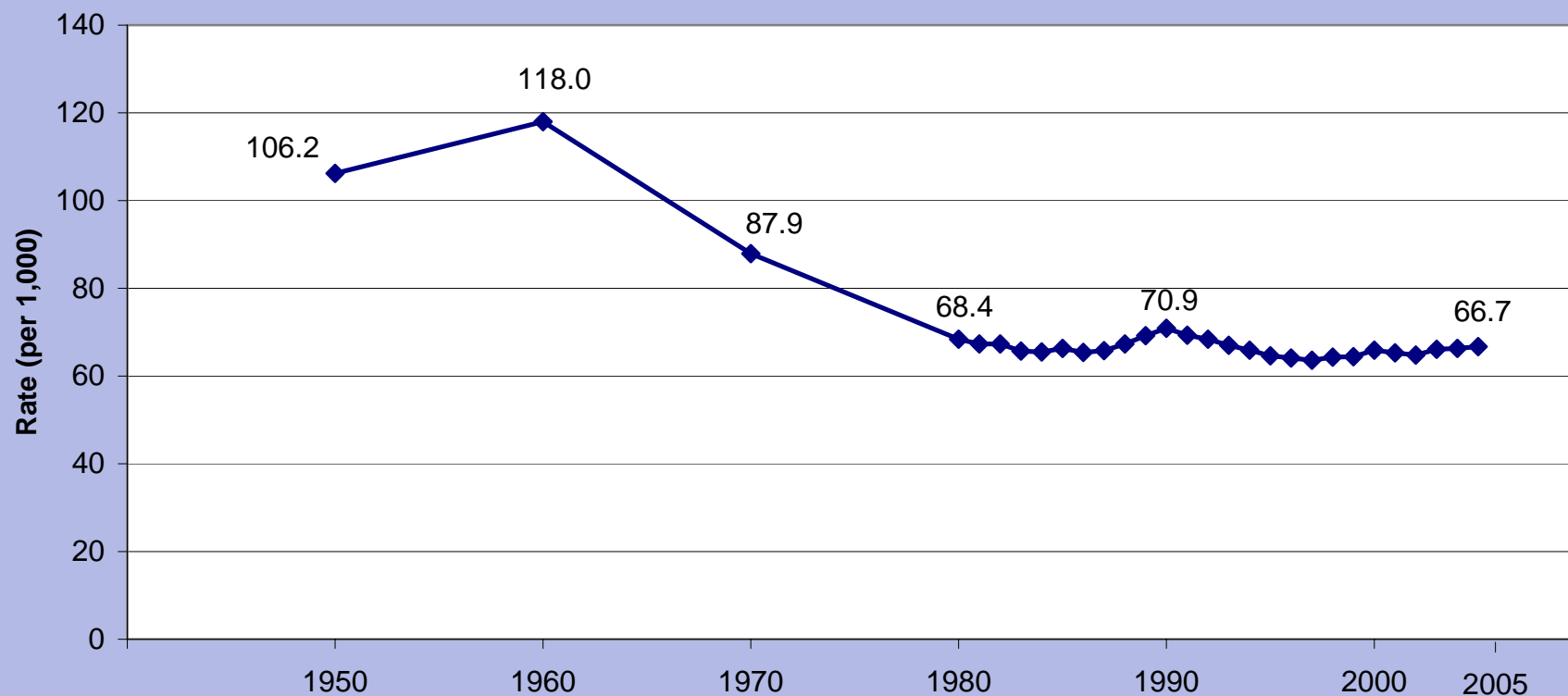
² Ibid.

³ *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 Fertility Rate (births per 1,000 women 15-44), Selected Years 1950-2005*



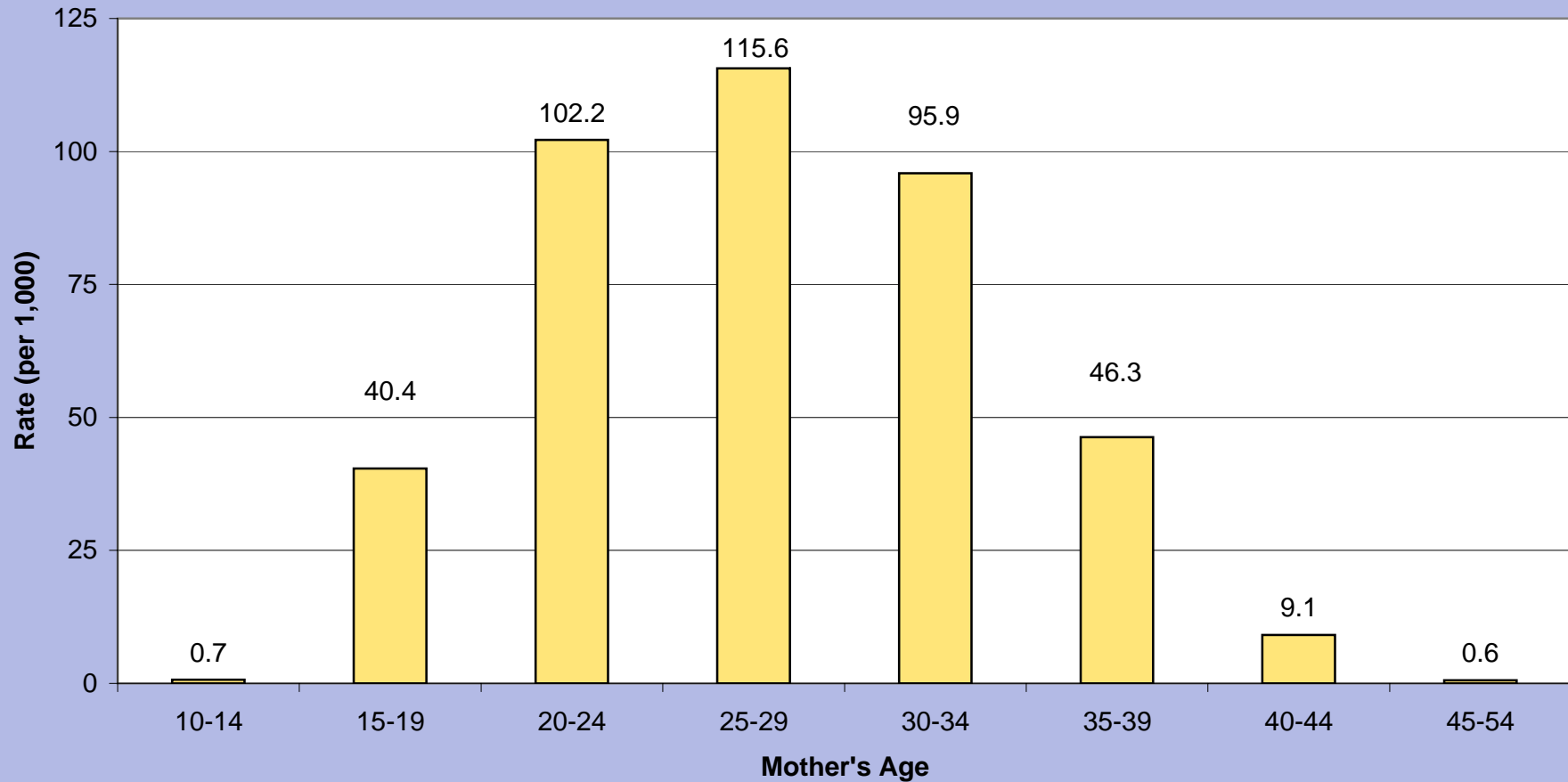
*2005 estimates are based on preliminary data.

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, Marland: National Center for Health Statistics. 2003. Tables 1 and 2. Data for 2002 from: Hamilton BE, Martin JA, Sutton PD, Ventura SJ, Menacker F, and Munson, ML. Births: Final Data for 2002. *National vital statistics reports*; vol 52 no 10. Hyattsville, Maryland: National Center for Health Statistics. 2003. Table 3. Data for 2003: Martin JA, Hamilton BE, Sutton PD, et al. (2005). "Births: Final data for 2003." *National Vital Statistics Reports*, 54(2). Hyattsville, MD: National Center for Health Statistics. http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/nvsr/nvsr54/nvsr54_02.pdf. (See Tables 9 and 13). Data for 2004: Martin JA, Hamilton BE, Sutton PD, et al. (2006). "Births: Final data for 2004." *National Vital Statistics Reports*, 55(1). Hyattsville, MD: National Center for Health Statistics. Table 18. http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/nvsr/nvsr55/nvsr55_01.pdf. Preliminary Data for 2005: Hamilton BE, Martin JA, and Ventura SJ. (2006). "Births: Preliminary data for 2005." *National Vital Statistics Reports*; vol 55. Hyattsville, MD: National Center for Health Statistics. Tables 1, 5. <http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/products/pubs/pubd/hestats/prelimbirths05/prelimbirths05.htm#ref02>



Figure 2

Birth Rate¹ (per 1,000 Women) by Age of Woman, 2005*



¹Birth rates are defined as the total number of births per 1,000 women in each age group.

*2005 estimates are based on preliminary data.

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

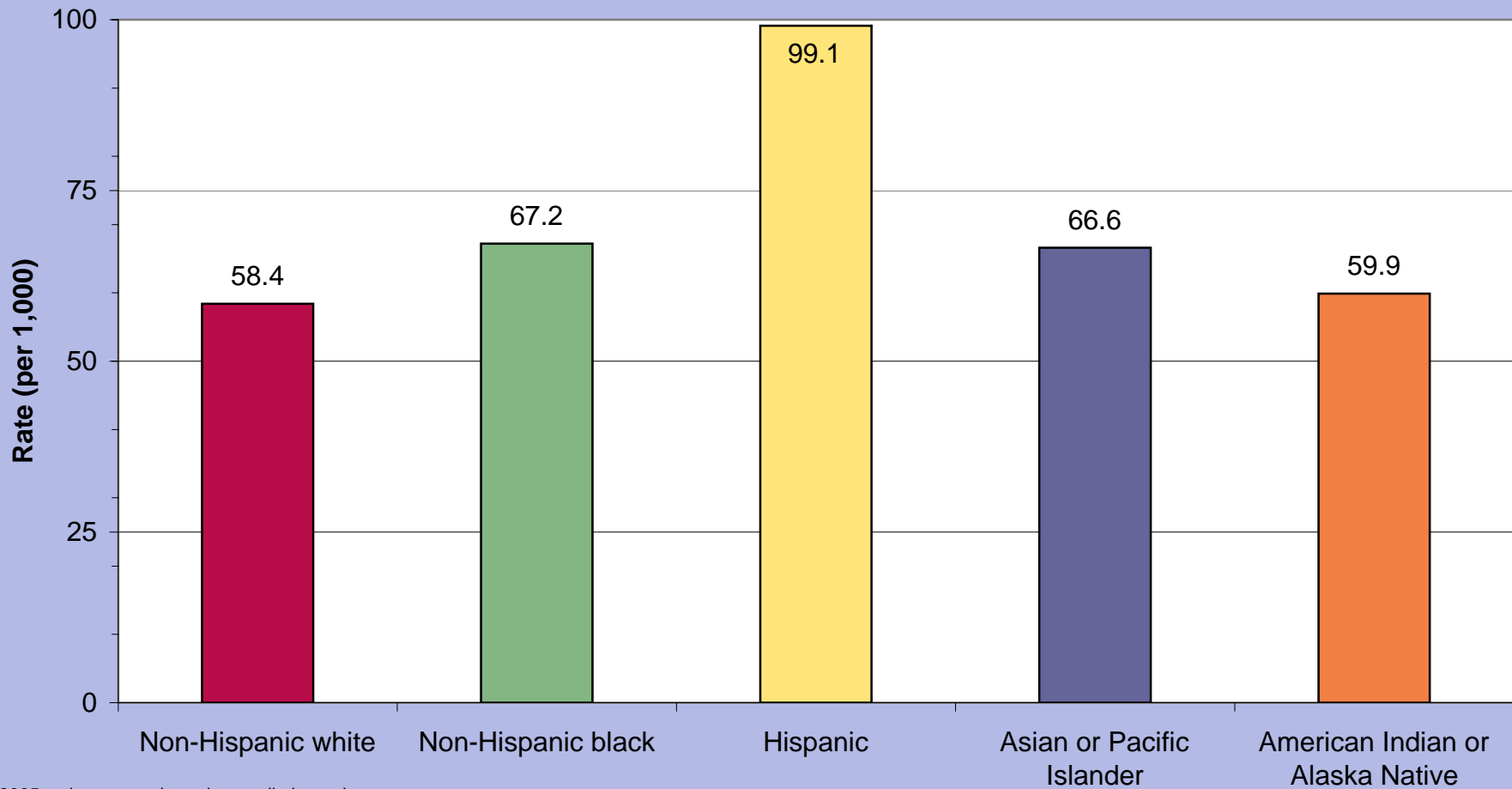
Source: Hamilton BE, Martin JA, and Ventura SJ. (2006). "Births: Preliminary data for 2005." *National Vital Statistics Reports*; vol 55. Hyattsville, MD: National Center for Health Statistics. Tables 1, 5.

<http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/products/pubs/pubd/hestats/prelimbirths05/prelimbirths05.htm#ref02>



Figure 3

Fertility Rates (per 1,000 women) by Race and Ethnicity, 2005*



*2005 estimates are based on preliminary data.

Note: Data for Hispanics include 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: Hamilton BE, Martin JA, and Ventura SJ. (2006). "Births: Preliminary data for 2005." *National Vital Statistics Reports*; vol 55. Hyattsville, MD: National Center for Health Statistics. Tables 1, 5.

<http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/products/pubs/pubd/hestats/prelimbirths05/prelimbirths05.htm#ref02>



Table 1

Fertility Rates¹ (per 1,000 Women) by Race and Ethnicity and Birth Rates¹ by Age, Selected Years 1950-2005*

	1950	1960	1970	1980 ²	1985	1990	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005*
Total	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	66.1	66.3	66.7
Race/Ethnicity																	
White	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	64.8	66.1	66.1	66.4
White, non-Hispanic	-	-	-	62.4	-	62.8	57.5	57.1	56.8	57.6	57.7	58.5	57.7	57.4	58.5	58.4	58.4
Black	-	153.5	115.4	84.9	78.8	86.8	71.0	69.2	69.0	69.4	64.5	76.0	67.6	65.8	66.3	67.6	68.9
Black, non-Hispanic	-	-	-	90.7	-	89.0	72.8	70.7	70.3	70.9	69.9	71.4	69.1	67.4	67.1	67.0	67.2
Hispanic³	-	-	-	95.4	-	107.7	98.8	97.5	94.2	93.2	93.0	95.9	96.0	94.4	96.9	97.8	99.1
Mexican	-	-	-	-	-	118.9	109.9	110.7	106.6	103.2	101.5	105.1	105.7	102.8	105.5	106.8	-
Puerto Rican	-	-	-	-	-	82.9	71.3	66.5	65.8	69.7	71.1	73.5	72.2	65.4	61.6	68.4	-
Cuban	-	-	-	-	-	52.6	52.2	55.1	53.1	46.5	47.0	49.3	56.7	59.0	61.7	53.2	-
Asian or Pacific Islander	-	-	-	73.2	68.4	69.6	62.6	62.3	61.3	60.1	60.9	65.8	64.2	64.1	66.3	67.1	66.6
American Indian or Alaska Native	-	-	-	82.7	78.6	76.2	63.0	61.8	60.8	61.3	59.0	58.7	58.1	58.0	58.4	58.9	59.9
Age																	
10-14	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	0.6	0.7	0.7
15-19	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	43.0	41.6	41.1	40.4
20-24	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	103.6	102.6	101.7	102.2
25-29	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	115.6	115.5	115.6
30-34	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	91.5	95.1	95.3	95.9
35-39	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	43.8	45.4	46.3
40-44	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	8.7	8.9	9.1
45-54⁴	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	0.5	0.5	0.6

*2005 estimates are based on preliminary data.

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

¹The 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

²Data 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

³Includes all persons of Hispanic origin of any race.

⁴Birth rates computed by relating births to women ages 45-54 years to women ages 45-49 years.

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, Ventura SJ, Menacker F, and Munson, ML. Births: Final Data for 2002. *National vital statistics reports*; vol 52 no 10. Hyattsville, Maryland: National Center for Health Statistics. 2003. Tables 3 and 6. Data for 2003: Martin JA, Hamilton BE, Sutton PD, et al. (2005). "Births: Final data for 2003." *National Vital Statistics Reports*, 54(2). Hyattsville, MD: National Center for Health Statistics. http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/nvsr/nvsr54/nvsr54_02.pdf. (See Tables 9 and 13). Data for 2004: Martin JA, Hamilton BE, Sutton PD, et al. (2006). "Births: Final data for 2004." *National Vital Statistics Reports*, 55(1). Hyattsville, MD: National Center for Health Statistics. http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/nvsr/nvsr55/nvsr55_01.pdf. (See Tables 3 and 7). Preliminary Data for 2005: Hamilton BE, Martin JA, and Ventura SJ. (2006). "Births: Preliminary data for 2005." *National Vital Statistics Reports*; vol 55. Hyattsville, MD: National Center for Health Statistics. Tables 1, 5. <http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/products/pubs/pubd/hestats/prelimbirths05/prelimbirths05.htm#ref02>

