

Estimates of Pregnancies and Pregnancy Rates for the United States, 1976–81

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AN ESTIMATED 5,958,000 PREGNANCIES ended in 1981, nearly 1 million more than the number estimated just 5 years earlier. Although the pregnancy rate increased 8 percent, the number of pregnancies rose at even a faster pace, by 19 percent, as a result of the substantial growth in the number of women in the principal child-bearing ages. A review of pregnancy statistics for the 1976–81 period indicates increases in pregnancies and pregnancy rates and in all outcome categories—live births, induced abortions, and fetal deaths. The greatest increases were observed for numbers and rates of live birth for women aged 30–34 years and of induced abortion for women under 35 years. Increases in rates for all outcome categories were generally confined to white women, but rates for all other women remained consistently higher than rates for white women in each outcome throughout this period.

There were 3,629,000 live births in 1981, of which 15 percent occurred to mothers under 20 years. Mothers aged 20–29 accounted for nearly two-thirds of all births. Induced abortions numbered an estimated 1,577,000 in 1981, with 28 percent occurring to teenagers and 55 percent to women in their 20s. Of the estimated 751,000 fetal deaths in 1981, 19 percent were to teenagers and 53 percent to mothers in their 20s (table 1).

In 1981, an estimated 61 percent of all pregnancies ended as a live birth, 26 percent as an induced abortion, and 13 percent as a fetal death. The proportion of pregnancies ending in a live birth varied from 47 percent for teenagers to 68 percent for women 25–29 years old.

Induced abortion ranged from 40 percent of teenage pregnancies to 19 percent of pregnancies for women 30–34 years. The proportion of pregnancies ending in fetal death varied from 13 percent for teenagers to 20 percent for women 35–39 years old (fig. 1).

These estimates of pregnancies are based on data compiled by the Division of Vital Statistics, National Center for Health Statistics, and are prepared by summing the

three outcomes: live birth, induced abortion, and fetal death. Live births are those tabulated by the Natality Statistics Branch, Division of Vital Statistics, from the birth registration system (1–4). Fetal death estimates are based on unpublished data from the National Survey of Family Growth, Division of Vital Statistics, conducted in 1982 by NCHS. These estimates are based on interviews with a national sample of about 8,000 women of child-bearing age and refer to their pregnancies of the previous 5 years. The estimates are undercounts of the actual number of fetal deaths to the extent that some fetal losses are not detected. For women under 15 years and those 35 years and older, estimates of fetal loss are based on small

Figure 1. Percent of pregnancies ending as a live birth, induced abortion, or fetal death, by age of woman, United States 1981

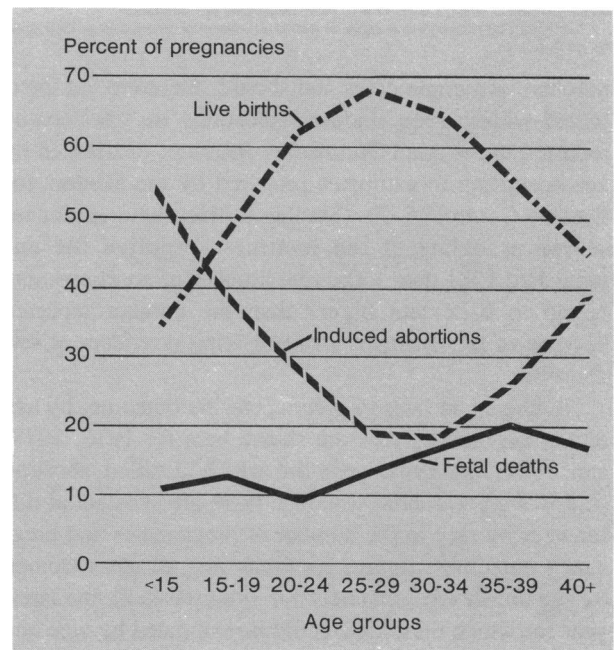


Table 1. Estimated number of pregnancies and pregnancy rates by outcome of pregnancy, age of woman, and race: United States, 1976, 1978, and 1981

Age of woman and race	1981				1978				1976			
	All pregnancies	Live births	Induced abortions	Fetal deaths ¹	All pregnancies	Live births	Induced abortions	Fetal deaths ¹	All pregnancies	Live births	Induced abortions	Fetal deaths ¹
Number in thousands												
Total	5,958	3,629	1,577	751	5,433	3,333	1,410	690	5,002	3,168	1,179	655
Under 15 years ..	28	10	15	3	29	11	15	4	32	12	16	4
15-19 years	1,103	527	433	142	1,109	543	419	147	1,073	559	363	151
15-17 years ..	425	187	176	61	438	203	169	66	NA	NA	NA	NA
18-19 years ..	678	340	257	81	671	341	250	81	NA	NA	NA	NA
20-24 years	1,945	1,212	555	178	1,796	1,140	489	167	1,644	1,092	392	160
25-29 years	1,662	1,128	316	218	1,477	1,015	266	196	1,380	972	221	188
30-34 years	897	581	167	148	730	474	134	121	602	392	110	100
35-39 years	269	146	70	53	237	126	65	46	214	116	57	42
40 years and older	54	25	21	9	53	24	21	9	56	26	21	9
White	4,564	2,909	1,108	548	4,156	2,681	969	505	3,837	2,568	785	485
All other races ..	1,394	721	470	204	1,277	652	440	184	1,165	600	394	170
Rate per 1,000 women												
Total ²	110.7	67.4	29.3	14.0	106.7	65.5	27.7	13.5	102.7	65.0	24.2	13.4
Under 15 years ³ .	3.1	1.1	1.7	0.4	3.2	1.2	1.6	0.4	3.2	1.2	1.6	0.4
15-19 years	110.3	52.7	43.3	14.2	105.1	51.5	39.7	13.9	101.4	52.8	34.3	14.3
15-17 years ..	72.7	32.1	30.1	10.5	69.7	32.2	26.9	10.5	NA	NA	NA	NA
18-19 years ..	163.1	81.7	61.9	19.4	157.2	79.8	58.4	19.0	NA	NA	NA	NA
20-24 years	179.5	111.8	51.2	16.4	173.2	109.4	47.2	16.1	166.1	110.3	39.6	16.2
25-29 years	165.0	112.0	31.4	21.6	157.9	108.5	28.4	21.0	150.7	106.2	24.1	20.5
30-34 years	94.8	61.4	17.7	15.7	88.9	57.8	16.4	14.7	82.3	53.6	15.0	13.7
35-39 years	36.7	20.0	9.5	7.2	35.7	19.0	9.8	6.9	35.3	19.0	9.3	6.9
40 years and older ⁴	8.8	4.0	3.4	1.4	9.2	4.1	3.6	1.5	9.9	4.5	3.7	1.6
White	100.3	63.9	24.3	12.0	95.7	61.7	22.3	11.6	92.0	61.5	18.8	11.6
All other races ..	167.1	86.4	56.3	24.4	170.4	87.0	58.7	24.6	166.4	85.8	56.3	24.3

¹ Spontaneous fetal losses from recognized pregnancies of all gestational periods as reported by women in the 1982 National Survey of Family Growth, conducted by the National Center for Health Statistics. It is known that the rate of pregnancy loss depends on the degree to which losses at very early gestations are detected.

² Computed by relating the number of events to women of all ages to women aged 15-44 years.

³ Computed by relating the number of events to women under 15 years to women aged 10-14 years.

⁴ Computed by relating the number of events to women aged 40 years and over to women aged 40-44 years.

NOTE: Due to rounding, figures may not add to totals; NA = data not available.

numbers of sample cases and should, therefore, be interpreted with caution. Induced abortions are total counts reported to the Alan Guttmacher Institute, distributed by age according to estimates prepared by the Centers for Disease Control (5-7). (Stanley K. Henshaw, senior research associate of the Institute, supplied the unpublished 1981 data.) The true number of abortions may be up to 6 percent higher than the number reported because of the difficulty in identifying providers of few abortions.

Numbers and rates of pregnancies by outcome, by age of woman, and by race are shown here for 1976, 1978, and 1981, the latest year for which detailed abortion statistics are available. Because there are substantial differences by race in the number of pregnancies and pregnancy outcomes, figures for white and all other women by age are shown separately for 1980 (table 2), the latest year for which these data could be estimated by race and age. Estimates of the number of women by age and race

for each year used for computing rates are provided by the Bureau of the Census (8,9).

In 1981, the estimated pregnancy rate was 110.7 pregnancies per 1,000 women aged 15-44 years. Although the overall pregnancy rate increased 8 percent between 1976 and 1981, from 102.7 to 110.7, the increase was far greater for induced abortions than for live births or fetal deaths. The fertility rate was 67.4 live births per 1,000 women aged 15-44 years in 1981, just 4 percent higher than the 1976 rate of 65.0. The induced abortion rate was 29.3 in 1981, 21 percent higher than the rate in 1976 of 24.2. The estimated rate of fetal deaths among women of childbearing age was 14.0 in 1981, just 4 percent above the rate for 1976 of 13.4 (table 1).

Birth rates for women under 25 years were relatively stable between 1976 and 1981, while rates for women aged 25-34 increased sharply, reflecting the widely observed pattern of delayed childbearing. Birth rates have been highest for women in their 20s, averaging 112 per

1,000 in 1981. Rates of induced abortion increased for women of all ages under 40 years, with increases of 2 to 30 percent. Abortion rates in 1981 were highest for women aged 18–19 (61.9) and 20–24 years (51.2). Fetal death rates were virtually unchanged for women under 30 years of age. Rates for women in their early 30s increased 15 percent, perhaps a reflection of the higher level of delayed childbearing among these women (table 1).

When the data are examined by race, it is apparent that, although the overall increases in the number of pregnancies are about 20 percent for both white women and women of all other races, there are large differences within the various pregnancy outcomes by race (tables 1 and 2). The numbers of births and fetal deaths to white women each increased 13 percent, compared with 20 percent increases in these events for women of all other races. In contrast, the number of induced abortions for white women increased 41 percent, more than double the 19 percent increase for all other women.

The pregnancy rate for all other women in 1981 was 1.7 times the rate for white women (167.1 compared with 100.3). Although the birth rate for all other women is just 1.4 times the rate for white women, the differential by race is far greater for induced abortions, 2.3, and fetal deaths, 2.0. The race differential declined somewhat between 1976 and 1981 because rates for all other

'Birth rates for women under 25 were relatively stable between 1976 and 1981, while rates for women 25–34 increased sharply, reflecting delayed childbearing.'

women during this period were fairly stable, while rates for white women increased.

Detailed data on pregnancies and pregnancy rates by outcome of pregnancy, for 1980 for white and all other women, are shown in table 2 and figure 2. Birth rates for all other women are up to twice the rates for white women at every age. Induced abortion and fetal death rates, however, are even higher—generally two to three times as high for all other women as for white women—and the racial differential increases with advancing age.

Pregnancies among all other women aged 20 and older are more likely to end in induced abortions and fetal deaths than are pregnancies among white women of the same age. In contrast, among teenagers, the proportions of pregnancies ending in induced abortions and fetal deaths are higher for white women (fig. 2).

Table 2. Estimated number of pregnancies and pregnancy rates by outcome of pregnancy, age of woman, and race: United States, 1980

Age of woman	All races				White				All other			
	All pregnancies	Live births	Induced abortions	Fetal deaths ¹	All pregnancies	Live births	Induced abortions	Fetal deaths ¹	All pregnancies	Live births	Induced abortions	Fetal deaths ¹
Number in thousands												
All ages ..	5,913	3,612	1,554	747	4,541	2,899	1,100	542	1,372	714	454	205
Under 15 years ..	29	10	15	3	14	4	8	1	15	6	7	2
15–19 years	1,146	552	445	149	831	388	332	111	315	164	113	38
20–24 years	1,956	1,226	549	180	1,509	983	390	137	447	244	159	44
25–29 years	1,626	1,108	304	214	1,305	933	206	166	321	175	98	48
30–34 years	844	550	153	140	653	459	103	90	191	91	50	50
35–39 years	258	141	67	51	191	113	46	31	68	28	20	20
40 years and older	54	24	21	9	38	19	15	5	16	6	6	4
Rate per 1,000 women												
All ages ² ..	111.9	68.4	29.4	14.1	101.4	64.7	24.6	12.1	170.3	88.6	56.3	25.4
Under 15 years ³ ..	3.2	1.1	1.7	0.4	1.8	0.6	1.1	0.2	9.8	3.9	4.7	1.2
15–19 years	110.0	53.0	42.7	14.3	95.8	44.7	38.3	12.8	181.3	94.6	64.9	21.8
20–24 years	183.6	115.1	51.6	16.9	168.1	109.5	43.4	15.2	266.0	145.0	94.9	26.0
25–29 years	165.7	112.9	31.0	21.8	157.3	112.4	24.8	20.0	211.6	115.5	64.7	31.4
30–34 years	95.0	61.9	17.2	15.8	85.9	60.4	13.6	11.9	148.2	70.8	38.5	38.8
35–39 years	36.4	19.8	9.4	7.2	31.2	18.5	7.6	5.2	68.1	27.9	20.4	19.7
40 years and older ⁴	9.1	4.1	3.5	1.5	7.5	3.6	2.9	1.0	18.8	6.8	7.4	4.6

¹ Spontaneous fetal losses from recognized pregnancies of all gestational periods as reported by women in the 1982 National Survey of Family Growth, conducted by the National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS). It is known that the rate of pregnancy loss depends on the degree to which losses at very early gestations are detected.

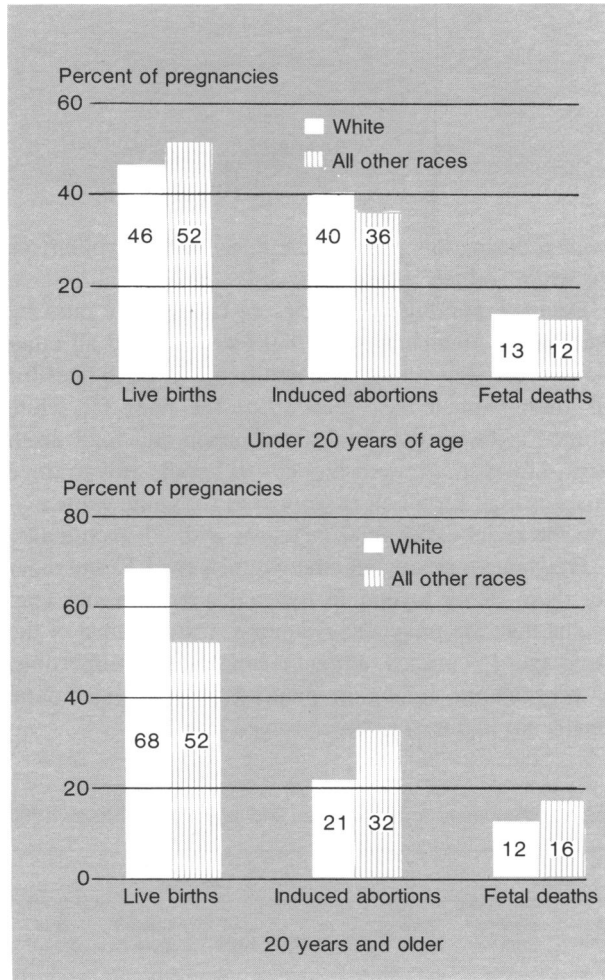
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⁴ Computed by relating the number of events to women aged 40 years and over to women aged 40–44 years.

NOTE: Due to rounding, figures may not add to totals.

Figure 2. Percent of pregnancies ending as a live birth, induced abortion, or fetal death by race for women under 20 years of age and those 20 years or older, United States 1980



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Age Variation in Use of a Contraceptive Service by Adolescents

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Synopsis

During the past decade, much has been written about adolescents' use of contraception and their experience of pregnancy. Few researchers, however, have distinguished between the experiences of older and younger adolescents.

The purpose of this paper is to provide such a comparison. The data were collected during more than 7,000 visits made by 4,318 patients during almost 5 years of