

U.S. rate dropped last year, suggesting 2024 uptick was short-lived

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NEW YORK>> U.S. births fell a little in 2025, according to newly posted provisional data.

Slightly more than 3.6 million births have been reported through birth certificates, or about 24,000 fewer than in 2024. The decline seems to confirm predictions by some experts, who doubted a slight increase in births in 2024 marked the start of an upward trend.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention updated its provisional birth data late last week, filling in two months of missing data and offering the first good look at last year's tally.

The posted numbers account for nearly all of the babies born in 2025, according to the CDC. Data is still being compiled and analyzed, but the final tally might only add "a few thousand additional births," said Robert Anderson, who oversees birth and death tracking at the CDC's National Center for Health Statistics.

Experts say people are marrying later and also worry about their ability to have the money, health insurance and other resources needed to raise children in a stable environment.

Last year, the Trump administration took steps to encourage more births, like issuing an executive order meant to expand access to and reduce costs of in vitro fertilization and backing the idea of "baby bonuses" that might encourage more couples to have kids.

So far, only the number of births are available — and not birth rates and other information that can give insights into who is having babies.

For example, although births increased in 2024 over the year before, the fertility rate actually fell, noted Karen Guzzo, a family demographer at the University of North Carolina.

The fertility rate is a statistic describing whether each generation has enough children to replace itself — about 2.1 kids per woman. It has been sliding in America for close to two decades as more women wait longer to have children or don't have kids at all.

For 2025, "I wouldn't expect birth or fertility rates to have risen; I would expect them to fall because childbearing is highly related to economic conditions and uncertainty," Guzzo said in an email.

Also, most of the births in 2025 would have been children conceived in 2024, when people were worried about affordability and political polarization, she said.

As a general trend, U.S. births and birth rates have been falling for years. They dropped in 2020, then rose for two straight years after that, an increase experts partly attributed to pregnancies put off amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

A 2% drop in 2023 put U.S. births at fewer than 3.6 million, the lowest one-year tally since 1979.