

The teen birthrate fell 7%, extending a yearslong decline.

U.S. Fertility Rates Fall, Reaching Record Lows

By Anthony DeBarros, Paul Overberg and Andrea Petersen

The nation's fertility rates hit record lows in 2025 as childbearing continued to shift toward older women, federal data released Thursday showed. For the sixth straight year, the number of children born in the U.S. remained at about 3.6 million.

The number of births per 1,000 women ages 15 to 44—the general fertility rate—reached a record low of 53.1 in 2025, the provisional data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention show. The rate has mostly headed down since 2007, a prerecession peak when millennial women started to enter their prime childbearing years.

One long-term trend driving the slide: a sharp decrease in birthrates for teens and women in their 20s. In 2025, birthrates for women in their late 30s exceeded those for women in their early 20s for the first time. *Note*

The lack of growth in births continues to be driven by uncertainty about the future, including concern over finances, relationship stability and the political climate, said Wendy Manning, a demographer at Bowling Green State University in Ohio. *Note*

However, research shows many women still desire to have children. "People are waiting longer to enter parenthood and probably want to make sure that things are set in their lives before they do so," said Manning, co-director of the university's National Center for Family and Marriage Research. "There might be a lot of uncertainty, and that might not be good for a society in general."

The teen birthrate fell 7% last year, extending a yearslong decline related to publichealth campaigns and growing use of longer-acting contraceptives. Since 2007, the birthrate for 15- to 19-yearolds has fallen 72% in the U.S. *Note*

"We spent decades and lots of money trying to discourage early childbearing, saying, 'This will ruin your life. This will ruin your kid's life. Don't do it,'" said Karen Benjamin Guzzo, director of the Carolina Population Center at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

In the 1980s and 1990s, the U.S. had much higher teen birthrates than many other developed countries, she said.

Among adolescents ages 15 to 17, the birthrate dropped 11% in 2025. Among those ages 18 and 19, the rate fell 7%, according to CDC data.

Another measure—the total fertility rate—also hit a record low. The total fertility rate is the average number of children each woman would have in her lifetime if birthrates for each age group were to continue at that year's pace through her childbearing years. A rate below 2.1 means a population isn't replacing itself and will eventually shrink without immigration. *Note*

Last year, the U.S.'s total fertility rate fell to 1.57 births per woman, a Wall Street Journal calculation using provisional CDC data found. The drop in total fertility in the U.S. follows worldwide trends, but it remains higher than in many developed nations.

The most recent estimates from the United Nations show that the worldwide rate continued to fall in 2023 and was nearing replacement level. It had dropped below replacement level in more than half of all countries.

Flat births and a rising number of deaths are eroding a perennial source of population growth. Last year, the U.S. recorded just over a half million more births than deaths. Census Bureau and Congressional Budget Office projections show that this small surplus of births over deaths will end in the next decade. Should that happen, growth would depend on immigration.

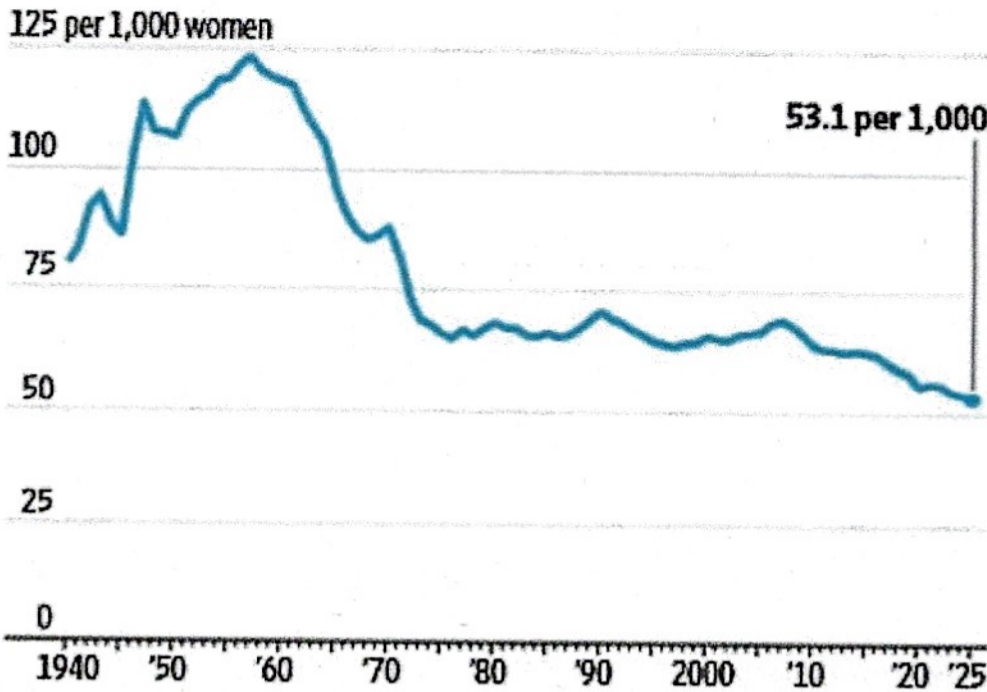
While non-Hispanic white women saw a small increase in births last year, births by women of other groups declined slightly.

Provisional births data for 2025 reflects more than 99% of birth records analyzed by the federal government. The totals and rates are typically adjusted when the final data is released.

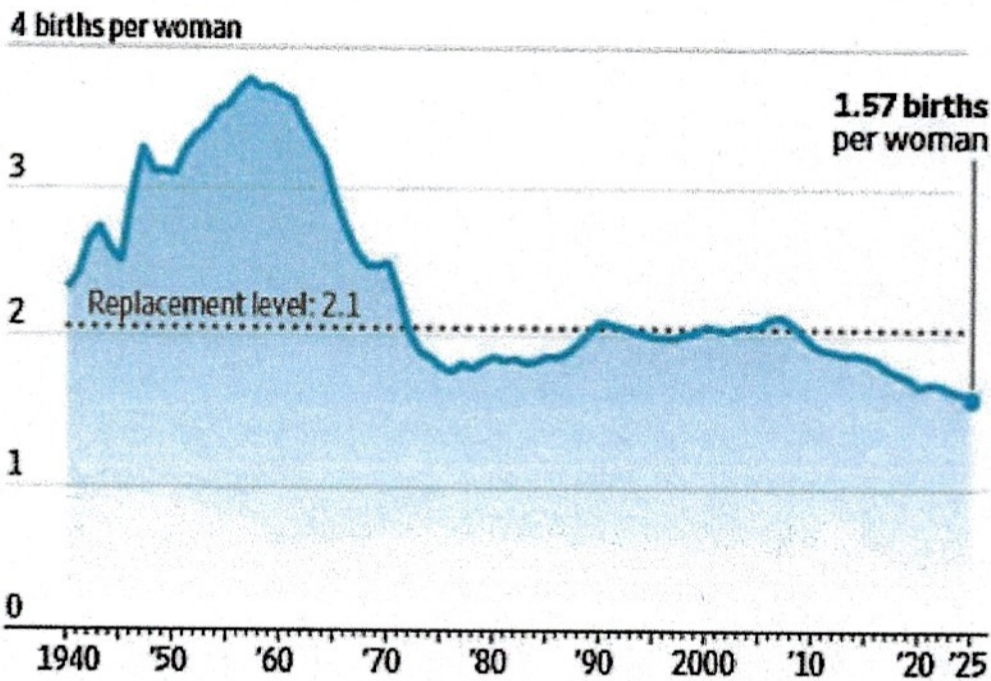
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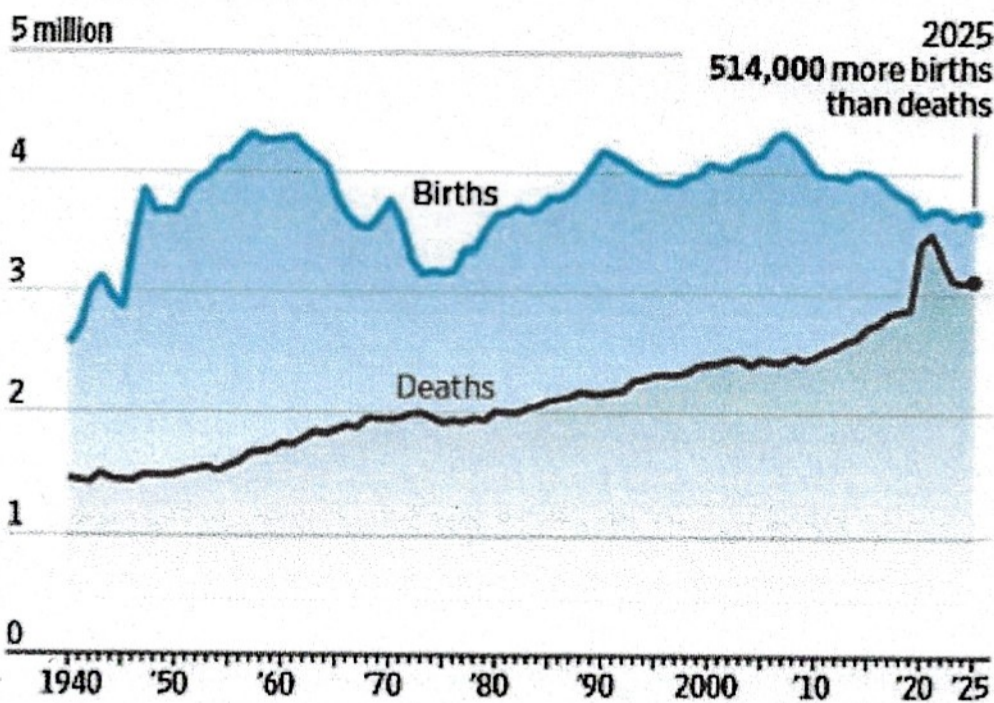
U.S. general fertility rate*



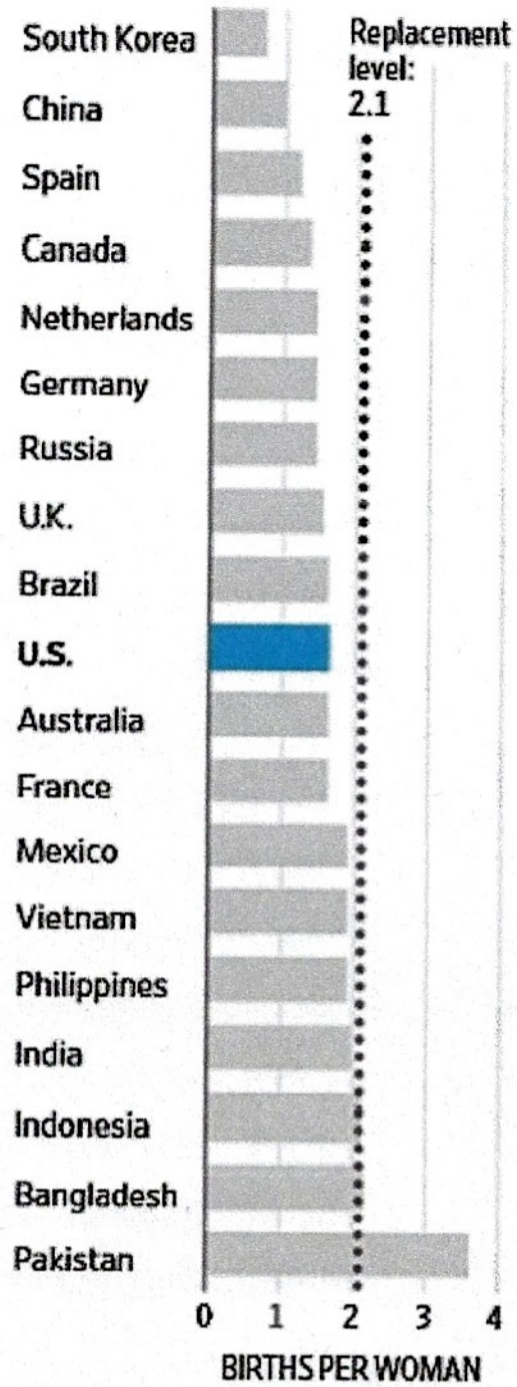
U.S. total fertility rate*



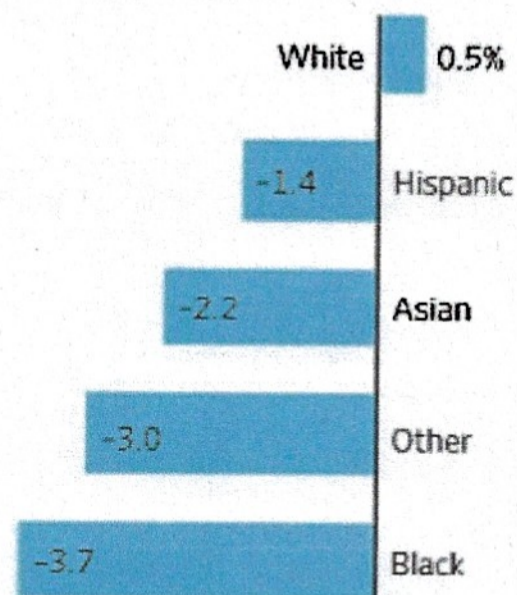
U.S. births and deaths



Total fertility rate for selected nations, 2023



Percentage change in U.S. births by race and ethnicity of mother, 2025 from 2024†



*The general fertility rate measures births per 1,000 females ages 15 to 44. †Total fertility rate is the average number of children a woman would have if birthrates for each age group were to continue at that year's pace through her childbearing years. ‡Race groups are non-Hispanic single race. People of Hispanic origin may be of any race. Other includes American Indian, Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian and other Pacific Islander. Note: Data for 2025 are provisional.

Sources: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention; United Nations (rate by nation)

