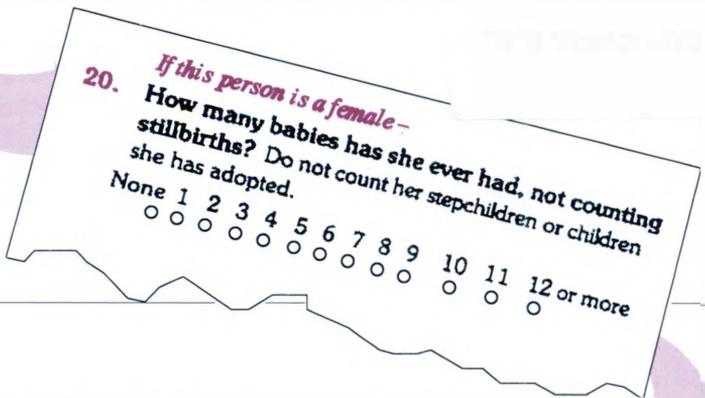


We asked... You told us Children Ever Born



The Census Bureau conducts a census of population and housing every 10 years. This bulletin is one of a series that shows the questions asked in the 1990 census and the answers that you, the American people, gave. Each bulletin focuses on a question or group of questions appearing on the 1990 census questionnaires.

In question 20 on the 1990 census forms, we asked all women 15 years old and over to report the number of children ever born to them. Stillbirths, stepchildren, and adopted children were not to be included in this number.

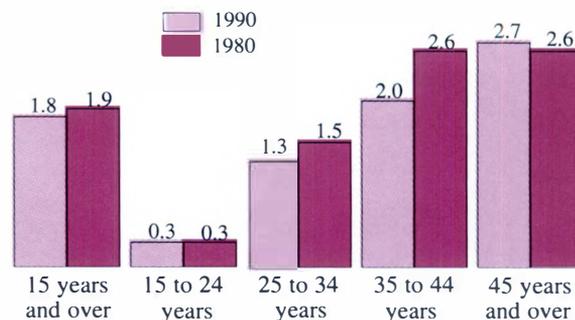
From what you told us, we learned that:

- The fertility of American women declined slightly between 1980 and 1990. The average number of children ever born to women 15 years and over was 1.8 children per woman in 1990, compared with 1.9 children per woman in 1980 (see top chart).
- The decline in fertility in the 1980s also was evident for most age groups of women¹. Only women 45 years and over showed an increase in their average number of children ever born (from 2.6 to 2.7 children per woman).
- The largest decline in fertility over the decade was registered by women 35 to 44 years old, whose average childbearing level fell dramatically from 2.6 to 2.0 children per woman. It appears certain now that these women—who were born in the first decade (1946–55) of the post-World War II “baby boom” years—will complete their childbearing with fertility below the replacement level. However, immigration to the United States will continue to play an important role in this country’s growth.
- In 1990, there were about 101.4 million women 15 years and over in the United States. Of these, 24 percent had borne exactly two children, an increase from the 21 percent reported by women in 1980 (see bottom chart).
- Between 1980 and 1990, declines were noted in both the proportion of women who were childless (no children ever born) and the proportion with 4 or more children. The proportion childless dropped from 34 percent to 31 percent, while the proportion with 4 or more children decreased from 17 percent to 14 percent. Thus, the proportion of women with 1, 2, or 3 children climbed from 50 percent to 55 percent.

¹Information on age was collected from question 5 (see CQC-5, Age).

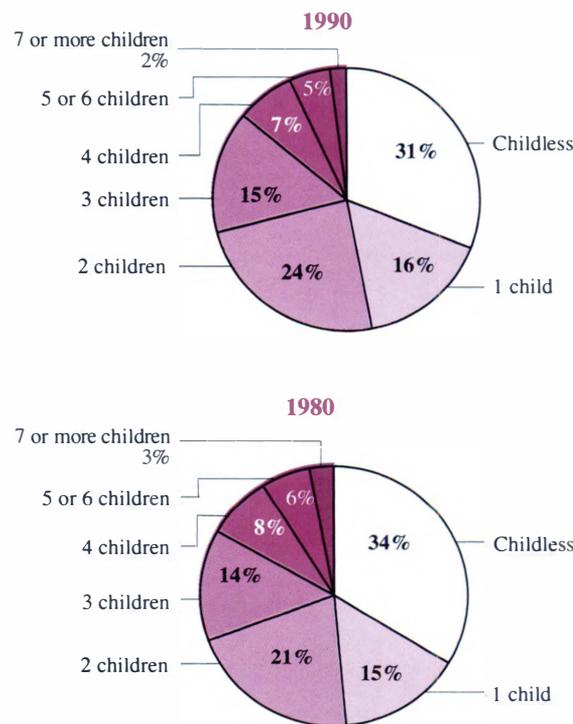
Fertility of American Women Decreased in 1980s

Number of Children Ever Born per Woman 15 Years and Over, by Age: 1990 and 1980



The 1980 Decade Saw Increase in Proportion of Women With Exactly Two Children Ever Born

Percent Distribution by Number of Children Ever Born to Women 15 Years and Over: 1990 and 1980



Census Trivia: Before every Mothers’ Day in May, many people call the Census Bureau to inquire about an important person in their life—their mother. Do you know how many mothers there were in the United States in 1990? (See answer on reverse.)

Note: Data on fertility are based on a sample and are subject to sampling variability.

Fertility of American Women Varied . . .

. . . By Race

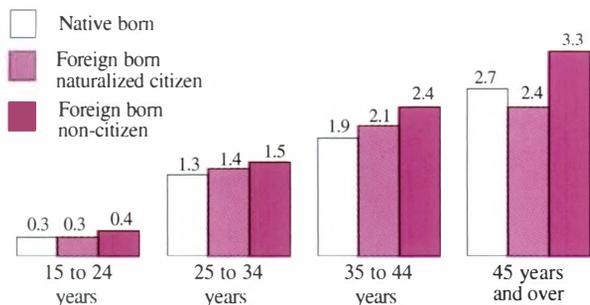
- As the top chart shows, American women 15 years and over of various races exhibited striking differences in their childbearing levels in 1990². Among the major race groups, for example, Black women reported a higher number of children ever born (2.1 children per woman) than White women (1.8 children), a level which in turn was higher than that for the combined group of Asian and Pacific Islander women (1.7 children).
- Among native Americans, Eskimo women had higher fertility—2.7 children on average—than American Indian women or Aleut women, both with 2.3 children per woman. The decennial census is the only source of fertility data for the separate groups of native Americans, that is, for American Indians, Eskimos, and Aleuts. In the many monthly surveys the Census Bureau also conducts, the data for these race groups generally are combined.
- For Asian and Pacific Islander groups, the average number of children ever born ranged from 1.4 children for Thai women to 2.5 children for Cambodian women and for Laotian women.

. . . And By Place of Birth and Citizenship

- Overall, foreign-born American women in 1990 had considerably higher fertility than women born in the United States (2.0 versus 1.8 children each).
- For each age group shown in the bottom chart, foreign-born women who were not U.S. citizens³ had higher fertility than those who were naturalized citizens. This pattern was especially pronounced among foreign-born women 45 years and over. For these women, noncitizens had 3.3 children per woman on average, as opposed to 2.4 children for naturalized citizens.

Foreign-Born Women Had Higher Childbearing Levels Than Native-Born Women

Number of Children Ever Born per Woman 15 Years and Over, by Age, Place of Birth, and Citizenship: 1990

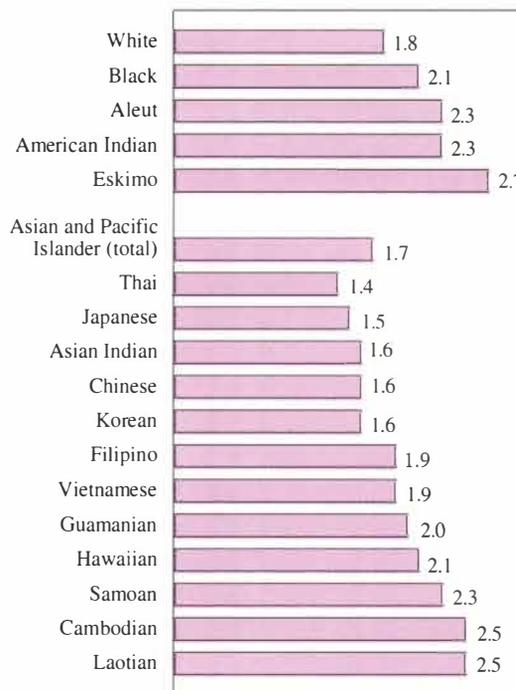


Who Uses This Information? Just a few examples:

- Manufacturers of baby products such as baby food, clothes, diapers, and toys, and manufacturers of maternity clothes and greeting cards as they develop and market their product lines
- Television producers of children's programs and planners of large family amusement parks
- Public agencies and private organizations to forecast needs of children such as for schools, hospitals, and childcare centers
- Federal, State, and local governments to allocate funds for supplemental food programs and other social services for women and children

Average Number of Children Ever Born Differed Greatly by Race of Mother

Number of Children Ever Born per Woman 15 Years and Over, by Detailed Race: 1990



Want to Know More?

- Most of the 1990 data in this bulletin came from the listing, CPH-L-194, *Children Ever Born by Parity, Race, Age, Marital Status, and Nativity of Women: April 1990*, available for purchase by calling 301-457-2422.
- In addition, data on fertility can be found in the 1990 census reports, CP-2, *Social and Economic Characteristics*, at a large public or university library. Also for sale by Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office (GPO). Call:
- Customer Services at the Census Bureau, 301-457-4100, for ordering information about the GPO reports listed above or to order copies of CQC bulletins or other Census Bureau products
- Amara Bachu, 301-457-2449, for more information on this bulletin or on fertility data
- Karen Mills, 301-457-3953, for general information on CQC bulletins

Trivia Answer: According to the 1990 census, there were about 70 million mothers 15 years and over.

² Information on race was collected from question 4 (see CQC-4, *Race*).

³ Information on place of birth and citizenship was collected from questions 8 and 9, respectively (see CQC-12, *Place of Birth, Citizenship, and Year of Entry*).



Issued March 1997

U.S. Department of Commerce
Economics and Statistics Administration
BUREAU OF THE CENSUS