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Births outside of marriage decline for immigrant women

Long-term growth in total U.S. births driven by the foreign born, who account for 23% of all babies

BY *Gretchen Livingston*

FOR MEDIA OR OTHER INQUIRIES:

Gretchen Livingston, Senior Researcher
Kim Parker, Director of Social Trends Research
Molly Rohal, Communications Manager

202.419.4372

www.pewresearch.org

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Terminology

A “new mother” or “mother of a newborn” in this report includes anyone who gave birth in the U.S. within the 12 months prior to being surveyed. New adoptive, foster and stepmothers are not included in this analysis.¹

“Births” refers to live births occurring in the calendar year in the U.S.

Except where noted, all variables, including race and ethnicity, are based on the characteristics of the mother, not of the father or the baby.

Any births to mothers born in one of the 50 states or the District of Columbia are defined as births to “U.S.-born” women in analyses based on National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS) data. Births to women born elsewhere, including Puerto Rico and other U.S. territories, are counted as births to “foreign-born” women.

For American Community Survey (ACS) and census analyses based on women who gave birth in the preceding 12 months, “U.S. born” includes those who were born in one of the 50 states or the District of Columbia, or who were born abroad to at least one American parent. All others are classified as “foreign born,” including those born in Puerto Rico and other U.S. territories.

While individuals born in Puerto Rico and other U.S. territories are U.S. citizens by birth, the convention of categorizing persons living in the U.S. who were born in U.S. territories as foreign-born has been used by both the United Nations and by NCHS in its online VitalStats data tabulator.²

The terms “foreign born” and “immigrant” are used interchangeably.

The foreign born in these analyses comprise both authorized and unauthorized immigrants.

A mother’s marital status is based on when she gives birth. Any mother who reports that she is married is classified as such, regardless of whether she is married to a man or a woman.

¹ [Estimates suggest](#) that about 3.5% of children are living with an adoptive, foster or stepmother.

² Had women born in Puerto Rico been classified as “U.S. born” for this analysis, the share of all births to U.S.-born women would have risen by 0.4 percentage points in 2014, and the share to foreign-born women would have declined by 0.4 percentage points. In addition, the share of births to unmarried women would have risen by 0.1 percentage point for U.S.-born women and declined by 0.4 percentage points for foreign-born women.

Racial references to whites, blacks and Asians include only those who are non-Hispanic. Hispanics are of any race.

“Some college” includes those with a two-year degree or those who attended college but did not obtain a degree. “High school” refers to those who have attained a high school diploma or its equivalent, such as a General Education Development (GED) certificate. A mother’s educational attainment is based on when she is interviewed for the ACS.

A mother’s age, employment status, income level, poverty status, English language skills and years in the U.S. are all based on her characteristics at the time she is interviewed for the ACS.

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Births outside of marriage decline for immigrant women

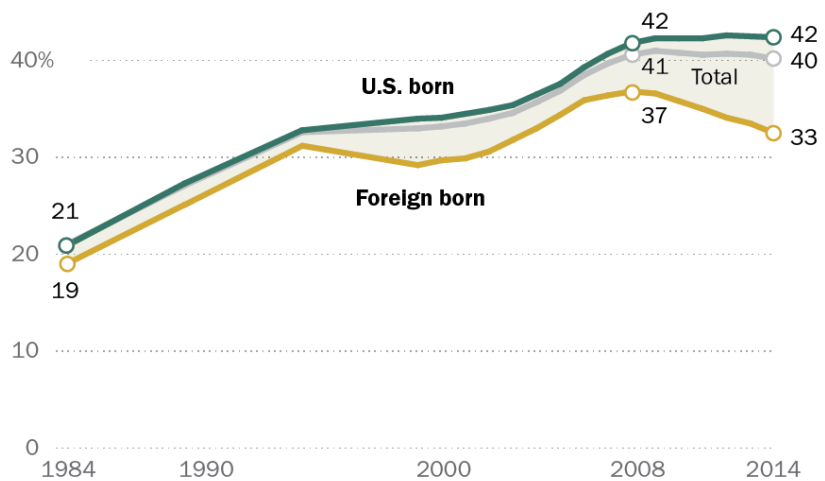
Long-term growth in total U.S. births driven by the foreign born, who account for 23% of all babies

After rising for decades, the share of U.S. babies born to unmarried women has stabilized in recent years, driven by a sharp decline in births outside of marriage among foreign-born women, and a leveling off among U.S.-born women.

In the newest available data (2014), a third of all births to foreign-born mothers were to unmarried women – down from a peak of 37% in 2008. At the same time, the rate has held steady for U.S.-born women and now stands at 42%, according to a new Pew Research Center analysis of government data.

As births outside of marriage decline among the foreign born, the gap between immigrant and U.S.-born moms widens

% of U.S. births to mothers who are unmarried, by mother's nativity



Source: Pew Research Center analysis of National Center for Health Statistics data. "Births outside of marriage decline for immigrant women"

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The share of babies born to unmarried mothers has consistently been higher for U.S.-born women than for immigrant women. However, the roughly 10-point gap³ between the two groups in 2014 is the largest disparity since birth data by nativity and marital status became available 30 years earlier.

The share of all babies born to unmarried women in the U.S. stood at 40% in 2014, down marginally from 41% in 2008, according to the National Center for Health Statistics. Thirty years earlier, just 21% of babies were born to unmarried women.

³ Percentage point differences are computed before numbers are rounded.

The decline in births outside of marriage among the foreign born is being driven, in part, by the changing regions of birth of new foreign-born mothers. The share of babies born to moms from Latin America has declined, while the share of babies born to moms from regions such as Asia has increased. New foreign-born mothers from Latin America were roughly four times as likely as moms from Asia to be unmarried in 2014.

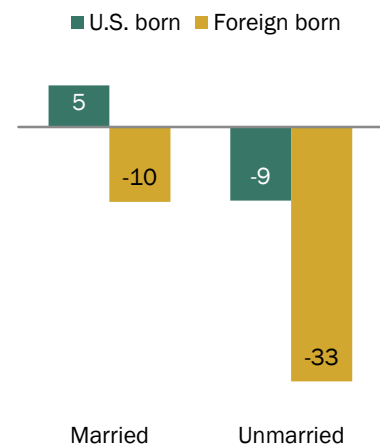
The shifting origins of new immigrant mothers are due in part to the [decline](#) in the number of recent U.S. immigrants from Latin America, which has been driven largely by [post-recession declines in Mexican immigrants](#), and to dramatic [birth rate declines](#) among Hispanic immigrants in the wake of the Great Recession.

Plummeting fertility rates among unmarried foreign-born women are further contributing to the declining share of babies born outside of marriage for this group. In 2014 the birth rate (the annual number of births per 1,000 women of childbearing age)⁴ for unmarried immigrants was 60.4. This is down from 90.0 in 2008 – a drop of 33% in just six years. Fertility among married foreign-born women also declined during this period marked by the onset of the [Great Recession](#), but by a relatively modest 10%, from 115.1 to 104.0.

In 2014, U.S. births to foreign-born women from Latin America were more likely to occur outside of marriage than those to U.S.-born women (48% vs. 42%). However, U.S. births to foreign-born women from most other regions of the world were less likely to occur outside of marriage than those to U.S.-born women.

For foreign-born women, big drop in fertility outside of marriage

% change in birth rates, by mother's marital status and nativity, 2008-2014



Source: Pew Research Center analysis of National Center for Health Statistics data and American Community Survey data (IPUMS).

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⁴ This is also known as the "general fertility rate." Childbearing age means ages 15 to 44.

Foreign-born mothers driving long-term growth in U.S. births

Foreign-born mothers have not only helped to curb the share of babies born to unmarried mothers in the U.S., but they are responsible for the nation's long-term growth in annual births as well.

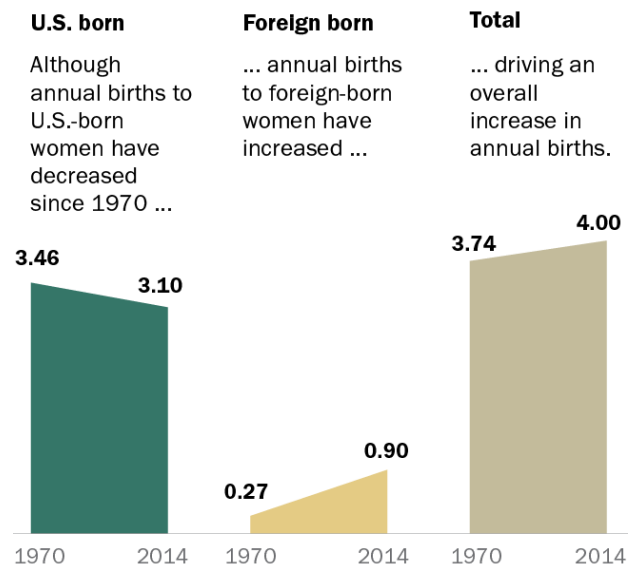
While the annual number of babies born in the U.S. has fluctuated in recent years – most markedly during the Great Recession when there was a [significant drop](#) in births nationwide – the trajectory over the past four decades or so has been upward. In 2014, there were 4.00 million births in the U.S., compared with 3.74 million in 1970.⁵

This growth has been driven entirely by the increasing numbers of babies born to immigrant women. In 2014, immigrant women accounted for about 901,000 U.S. births, which marked a threefold increase from 1970 when immigrant women accounted for about 274,000 births. Meanwhile, the annual number of births to U.S.-born women dropped by 11% during that same time period, from 3.46 million in 1970 to 3.10 million in 2014.

The increasing number of births to foreign-born mothers reflects more than just the [long-term rise in migration](#) to the U.S. In other words, it isn't just the fact that more immigrant women live in the U.S. now than in the past, it's that these women are having disproportionately more children than their U.S.-born counterparts. In fact, since data on nativity of new mothers became available in the 1970s, this has consistently been the case. For example, in 2014, 14% of the population was foreign born while 23% of newborns had foreign-born moms.

Since 1970, increase in annual number of U.S. births is driven entirely by immigrant women

Annual number of U.S. births, by mother's nativity (millions)



Source: Pew Research Center analysis of National Center for Health Statistics data.

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⁵ In 2015, U.S. births declined slightly, to 3.98 million, according to a [newly released NCHS report](#), which excludes the approximately 0.25% of U.S. births that occur to non-resident women. Except as noted, Pew Research Center analyses of NCHS data in this report include all U.S. births. Birth statistics by mother's nativity are not yet available for 2015. See Methodology for more details.

The relatively high birth rates of foreign-born women – which have bolstered the overall U.S. fertility rate – have played a key role in the high share of babies born to foreign-born women. In 2014, there were 58.3 births for every 1,000 U.S.-born women of childbearing age, and 84.2 among their foreign-born counterparts. Birth rates for both groups have declined since 1970, but the 2014 rate for foreign-born women is about the same as the rate for U.S.-born women four decades earlier.

Compared with U.S.-born women, birth rates are higher for foreign-born women from each region of the world. For example, women originally from sub-Saharan Africa have by far the highest annual fertility, with 106.4 births per 1,000 women of childbearing age.⁶ The rate for Latin Americans, who account for more than half of births to immigrant mothers in the U.S., is 80.6.

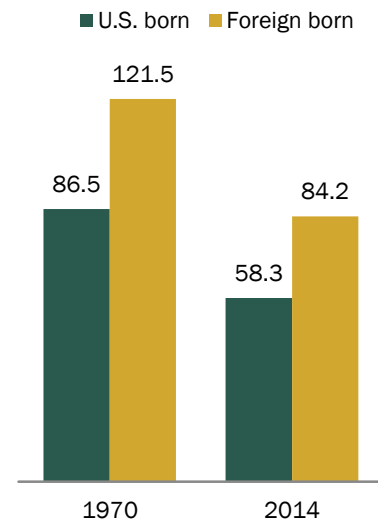
Foreign-born mothers, most of whom are long-term U.S. residents, lag behind U.S.-born mothers in economic well-being

According to Census Bureau data for 2011-2014,⁷ the vast majority of foreign-born new mothers in the U.S. are long-term immigrants. Fully half (51%) of those who had a baby in the preceding 12 months have lived in the U.S. for at least 11 years. Just 9% are recent immigrants, having come to the U.S. within the preceding two years. New mothers originally from the Middle East and North Africa are the most likely to be recent immigrants – about one-in-five (21%) are. Conversely, just 6% of new mothers from Latin America are recent immigrants.

In terms of financial well-being, new foreign-born mothers are less well-off than their U.S.-born counterparts – a pattern reflective of [broader nativity differences](#) in the country. While median family income for new U.S.-born moms is about \$51,200 annually, this figure is \$41,300 for new foreign-born moms. And while about 26% of new U.S.-born mothers live in poverty, this share rises to 31% for foreign-born new mothers. As with any profile of the foreign born, though, it's

Fertility of foreign-born women remains far higher than that of U.S.-born women

Births per 1,000 U.S. women ages 15 to 44, by mother's nativity



Source: Pew Research Center analysis of National Center for Health Statistics data, decennial census data and American Community Survey data (IPUMS). "Births outside of marriage decline for immigrant women"

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⁶ Birth rates calculated by mother's region of birth are based on a slightly different calculation method than the one used for birth rates by mother's nativity. The two methods produce similar results, but they are not precisely comparable. See Methodology for more details.

⁷ Most analyses of census data in this report are composed of multiple years of data from the American Community Survey, in order to produce sample sizes large enough to analyze differences across mother's region or country of birth.

worth noting the large variation in economic well-being by the mother's region of birth: Foreign-born new mothers from Latin America are more than four times as likely to be living in poverty (42%) as those from North America (9%),⁸ for example.

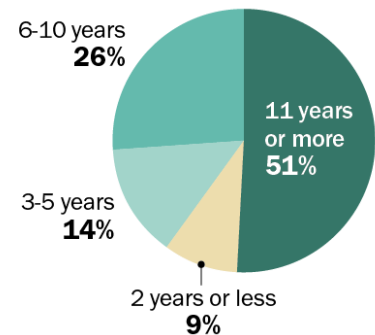
These nativity differences in economic well-being stem in part from the lower than average educational attainment of foreign-born mothers. Most notable is that immigrant new mothers are more than twice as likely as U.S.-born new mothers to lack a high school diploma (27% vs. 12%). Immigrant mothers also are less likely than the U.S. born to have some college experience (21% vs. 35%). Similar shares of both groups have a high school diploma but no further education (23%), or a bachelor's degree (29% for the foreign born, 31% for the U.S. born).

Other key findings:

- In 2014, about 275,000 babies were born to unauthorized-immigrant parents in the U.S., accounting for about 7% of all U.S. births, and 32% of all U.S. births to foreign-born mothers.
- The share of new mothers who are teenagers is higher among the U.S. born (6%) than among the foreign born (2%), regardless of the region of the world in which they were born.
- U.S.-born new mothers are less likely to be ages 35 or older than foreign-born mothers from most regions of the world. While about 18% of U.S.-born mothers are in this age range, the share is about twice as high for foreign-born moms from elsewhere in North America or from Europe or Asia.
- Although births to Mexican-born women have declined in recent years, they still accounted for 32% of all U.S. births to foreign-born women in 2014, up from 20% in 1970. Mexican-born mothers accounted for 7% of all U.S. births in 2014.

Most foreign-born moms are longtime U.S. residents

% of new foreign-born mothers, by years in the U.S., 2011-2014



Source: Pew Research Center analysis of American Community Survey data (IPUMS). "Births outside of marriage decline for immigrant women"

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⁸ Among new foreign-born mothers from North America, about 99% were born in Canada. Any foreign-born woman born in Bermuda or Greenland would also be identified as being from North America. Foreign-born women born in Mexico are categorized as Latin American. See Methodology for more details regarding regional classifications.

- More than half of all babies born to foreign-born women in the U.S. are to those from nine countries and one U.S. territory:⁹ Mexico, China, India, El Salvador, Guatemala, the Philippines, Honduras, Vietnam, Dominican Republic and Puerto Rico.
- Among new foreign-born U.S. mothers from the top 10 sending locations, those from India stand out for their low share of births outside marriage (1%), high rates of college degree attainment (87%), and high annual family incomes (\$104,500). At the opposite end of the spectrum, new mothers from Honduras stand out for the high share who are unmarried (66%), lack a high school diploma (51%) and are living in poverty (49%).

About the data

This report is based primarily on two data sources:

- National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS) data derived from U.S. birth certificates.
- American Community Survey (ACS) data based on all women ages 15 to 49 who have given birth in the U.S. in the 12 months prior to the survey.

Both are valuable sources of fertility information, and each offers particular advantages:

- The NCHS data allow for trend analysis back to 1970 but include only a handful of relevant maternal characteristics based on the time of the birth. Analyses of mother's nativity, country of birth and marital status are derived from the NCHS data.
- The ACS data do not offer a long time horizon but do include data on many maternal characteristics not available through NCHS data such as educational attainment, financial well-being and years spent in the U.S. All analyses other than those focused on mothers' nativity, country of birth and marital status are derived from the ACS data.

For more details on each dataset, please see the Methodology Region definitions.

⁹ Puerto Rico is a U.S. territory. Women born in Puerto Rico are U.S. citizens, but are classified as "foreign born" in this report. See Terminology for more details.

Road map to the report

This report is organized as follows. The first chapter provides an overview of trends since 1970 in U.S. births and birth rates among U.S.-born women and foreign-born women. The following chapter zeroes in on the trend since 1984 in births outside of marriage, and what factors may be contributing to the growing gap in births outside marriage between U.S.-born and foreign-born women. The third chapter examines differences by mother's nativity and region of birth on a number of other demographic and economic characteristics, including age, race, education, employment, financial well-being, years in the U.S. and English language skills. The last chapter examines the economic and demographic profiles of new mothers who were born in one of the nine countries and one U.S. territory accounting for the largest share of new U.S. foreign-born mothers.

1. Growth in annual U.S. births since 1970 driven entirely by immigrant moms

In 2014 more than 900,000 births in the U.S. were to foreign-born mothers. That marks a threefold increase from 1970, when 274,000 babies were born to immigrant mothers.¹⁰ The trend in births to U.S.-born women has moved in the opposite direction – from 3.46 million births in 1970 to 3.10 million in 2014 (an 11% drop). As a result of these divergent trends, the increase in the overall number of U.S. births, from 3.74 million in 1970 to 4.0 million in 2014, is due entirely to births to foreign-born mothers.¹¹

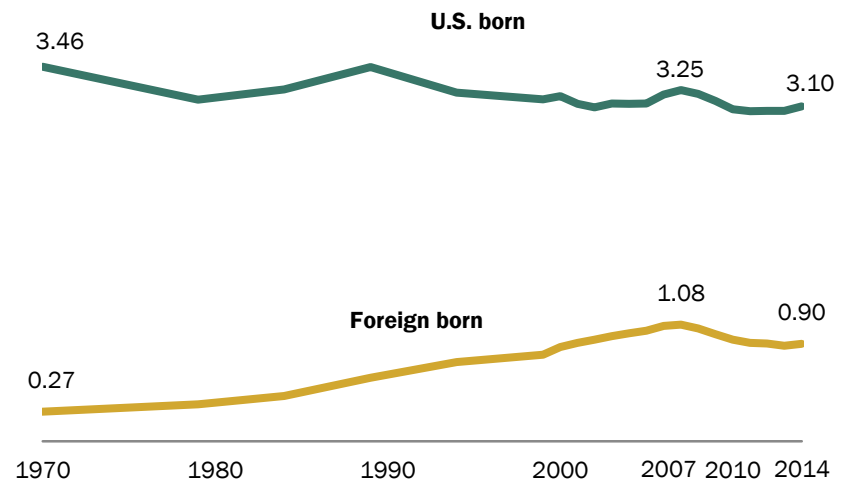
The annual number of births to all mothers – immigrant and native born – fell off

substantially during and after the Great Recession. Birth declines among the foreign born were both more dramatic and more enduring than those of U.S.-born women. While the number of births to U.S.-born mothers began to inch back up as early as 2012, it wasn't until 2014 that the number of babies born to foreign-born women ticked up.

Even given the birth declines associated with the Great Recession, by 2014, 23% of all babies born in the U.S. had immigrant mothers, up from just 7% in 1970. This long-term rise in the share of births to foreign-born women is partially – but not entirely – driven by growth in the overall U.S.

Births to immigrant moms tripled since 1970

Annual number of U.S. births, by mother's nativity (millions)



Source: Pew Research Center analysis of National Center for Health Statistics data. "Births outside of marriage decline for immigrant women"

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¹⁰ The focus throughout most of this report is on maternal characteristics, due in part to the dearth of data available regarding fertility from the father's perspective. For more on these limitations, see "[College-educated men take their time becoming dads.](#)"

¹¹ The outsized role that immigrants have played in U.S. births has contributed to their influence on overall U.S. population growth as well. According to [calculations from Pew Research Center](#), immigrants who have arrived since 1965, along with their children and grandchildren, accounted for some 55% of U.S. population growth since that time, and future immigrants and their descendants are expected to account for fully 88% of population growth over the next half century.

immigrant population. In 1970, just 5% of the U.S. population was foreign born; by 2014, that share had grown considerably, to 14%.

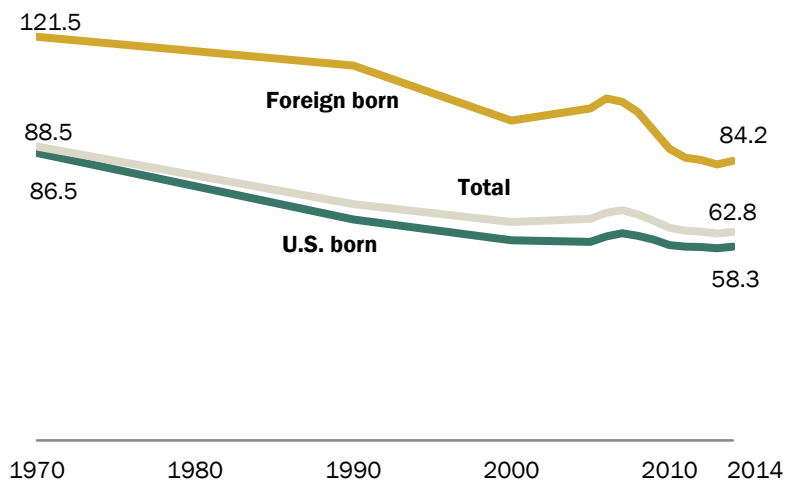
One factor likely contributing to the disproportionate share of births to immigrant women is the age and sex structure of the population. In 2014, while 14% of the entire U.S. population was comprised of immigrants, fully 17% of childbearing-age women in the U.S. were foreign born.

Nativity differences in the age and sex profile don't explain all of the fertility differences between the foreign born and U.S. born. Even taking into consideration the growth in the share of immigrant women of childbearing age, it's still the case that foreign-born women account for a disproportionately large share of births. This is due in part to the fact that foreign-born women in the U.S. have higher fertility than their U.S.-born counterparts. In 2014, the birth rate – children born per 1,000 women of childbearing age – stood at 84.2 for immigrant women. In comparison, the rate for U.S.-born women was 58.3. In other words, a foreign-born woman of childbearing age was about 44% more likely than her U.S.-born counterpart to have had a recent birth.¹²

This has been a consistent pattern since at least 1970, when the [modern wave of immigration](#), mainly from Latin America and Asia, was getting underway. The birth rate that year was 121.5 for immigrant women, while the rate for U.S.-born women was 86.5.

Birth rates among foreign-born women have been consistently higher than those of U.S.-born women

Births per 1,000 U.S. women ages 15 to 44, by mother's nativity



Source: Pew Research Center analysis of National Center for Health Statistics data, decennial census data and American Community Survey data (IPUMS).
 “Births outside of marriage decline for immigrant women”

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¹² Birth rate is just one measure of fertility – one that focuses on fertility within a given year, as opposed to lifetime fertility. Other measures provide [alternative perspectives](#) on fertility.

In 2006, just before the start of the recession, birth rates of foreign-born women were almost 70% higher than those of U.S.-born women (103.0 vs. 61.5). These differences have diminished somewhat since then, as [immigrant birth rates have declined more rapidly](#) than the birth rates of U.S.-born women in the wake of the Great Recession.

Though overall U.S. birth rates ticked up just prior to the recession, in the long term, they have declined noticeably. In 1970 the rate was 88.5 births per 1,000 women of childbearing age, and after hitting a [historical low](#) of 62.3 in 2013, rates inched up for the first time since the recession in 2014, to 62.8.¹³ The 2014 U.S. birth rate is about 29% lower than it was in 1970.¹⁴ For both the foreign born and U.S. born, long-term declines in fertility have been more dramatic – by 2014 the rate among the foreign born had dropped 31% since 1970 and among the U.S. born, there was a 33% decline.¹⁵

U.S. births to unauthorized immigrant parents

About 275,000 babies were born to unauthorized-immigrant parents in 2014, or about 7% of all births in the U.S. that year, according to new [Pew Research Center estimates](#) based on government data. This represented a decline from 330,000 in 2009, at the end of the Great Recession.

Births to unauthorized immigrants accounted for about one-in-three (32%) births to foreign-born mothers in 2014, according to the estimates.

The 2014 estimates of births to unauthorized immigrants are based on data from the Census Bureau's American Community Survey, using the widely accepted [residual methodology](#) employed by Pew Research Center for many years. By comparison, the findings in this report about the number of U.S. births to foreign-born mothers are based on data from the National Center for Health Statistics. Both data sources produce very similar results in terms of the number of U.S. births to immigrant mothers and their share of all U.S. births.

¹³ The birth rates used in this report differ slightly from published NCHS figures. See Methodology for more details.

¹⁴ The birth rate ticked back down to 62.5 in 2015, according to a [newly released NCHS report](#). Data regarding 2015 birth rates by nativity are not yet available.

¹⁵ It may seem counterintuitive that the birth rates for both foreign-born and U.S.-born women have declined more dramatically since 1970 than the overall U.S. birth rate. This phenomenon results from the fact that the share of childbearing-age women who are foreign born (who have markedly higher birth rates than U.S.-born women) has increased substantially since that time. Given their relatively high fertility, the growing size of this group has buoyed the overall U.S. fertility rate and kept it from falling more precipitously.

2. Births outside of marriage on the decline for immigrant women

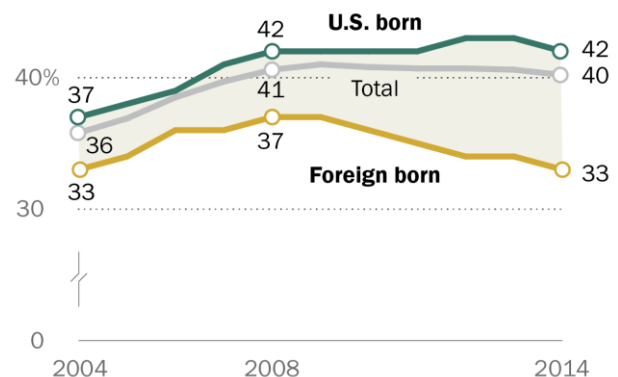
Births to unmarried mothers have been more common among the U.S. born than the foreign born for at least 30 years, but the gap between these two groups has grown markedly in the past decade, from 2004 to 2014.

In 1984, the first year for which data are available by mother's nativity and marital status, there was only a 2 percentage point difference between the share of babies born to unmarried foreign-born women (19%) and the share to unmarried U.S.-born women (21%), according to data from the National Center for Health Statistics.

Since 2000, the share of births outside of marriage rose then leveled off for U.S.-born women. In contrast, this share has been on the decline for foreign-born mothers since peaking in 2008. In 2014, 33% of births to foreign-born moms occurred outside marriage (the lowest level since 2004), compared with 42% among U.S.-born women. The relatively low share of babies born to unmarried mothers among the foreign born has helped to suppress the overall share of these births in the U.S., which stood at 40% in 2014.¹⁶

The growing nativity gap in births outside of marriage

% of U.S. births to mothers who are unmarried, by mother's nativity



Source: Pew Research Center analysis of National Center for Health Statistics data.

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¹⁶ [Preliminary data](#) for 2015 indicate that the overall share of births to unmarried mothers held steady at 40%.

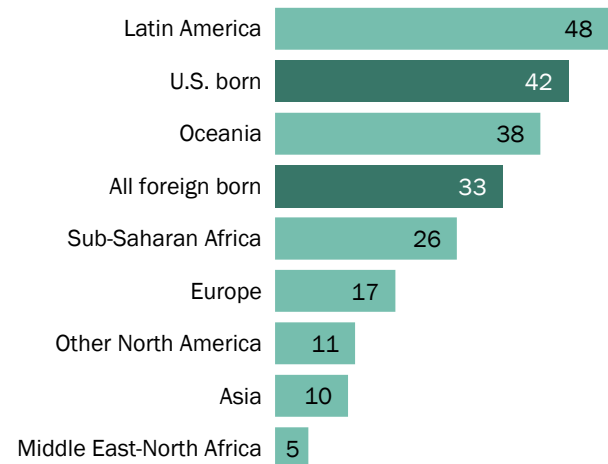
These patterns largely mirror nativity differences in the marital status of all women of childbearing age. Foreign-born women ages 15 to 44 are much more likely to be married than their U.S.-born counterparts, 55% vs. 34%, according to ACS data.

The share of births by unmarried immigrant women varies widely by their region of birth. Almost half (48%) of U.S. births to women from Latin America happen outside of marriage, according to NCHS data – a share higher than the share among U.S.-born women (42%). Among foreign-born women from most other regions of the world, however, births outside of marriage are less common than among U.S.-born women. For example, 26% of babies born to women from sub-Saharan Africa were born outside of marriage in 2014. And just 5% of U.S. births to women from the Middle East and North Africa are to unmarried women, as are about one-in-ten births to immigrant women from elsewhere in North America (11%) and Asia (10%). The 38% of births outside of marriage to women from Oceania is similar to the share among U.S.-born women.

The recent decline in the share of babies born outside of marriage among the foreign born is driven in part by the dramatic decline in fertility for unmarried immigrant women. The birth rate for these women has declined by one-third since 2008, from 90.0 births per 1,000 women to 60.4 in 2014. In comparison, the birth rate for unmarried U.S.-born women during that same time dropped by about 9%, to 37.4. Among married women, birth rates dropped 10% for the foreign born and rose 5% for the U.S. born.

Births outside of marriage most common among moms from Latin America

% of U.S. births to mothers who are unmarried, by mother's nativity and region of birth, 2014



Source: Pew Research Center analysis of National Center for Health Statistics data.

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Compositional factors that contribute to the nativity gap in births outside of marriage

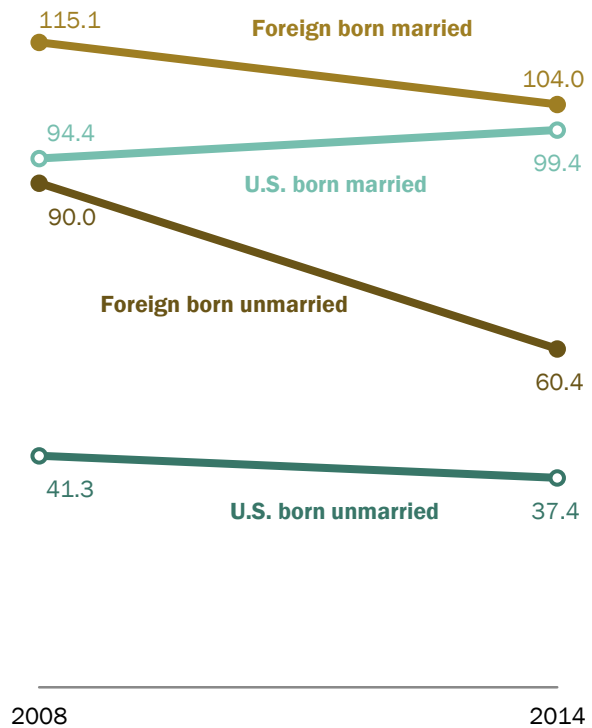
The recent downturn in births to unmarried foreign-born women is also due, in part, to the changing origins of foreign-born mothers in the U.S. In just six years, the share of births to mothers from Latin America – who are more likely than foreign-born mothers from any other region to be unmarried – dropped by 10 percentage points, from 64% in 2008 to 54% in 2014, according to data from the National Center for Health Statistics. At the same time, the share of new immigrant mothers from Asia – a group that is far less likely to be unmarried – rose by a similar amount.

Changes in the racial and ethnic composition of U.S.-born new moms have helped to sustain the relatively high share of births outside of marriage for that group. Since 2008, the share of U.S.-born new mothers who are white – and more likely to have births within marriage – has declined by 3 percentage points, while the share who are Hispanic – and more likely to have births outside of marriage – has risen by a similar amount.

The gap in births outside of marriage between U.S.-born and foreign-born women is a consequence not only of recent compositional changes, but also of enduring demographic differences. For instance, the share of births to teenagers has consistently been higher among the U.S. born than the foreign born. Since births outside of marriage are more common for teens than older women, this contributes to the nativity gap in this measure. And at the other end of the age spectrum, new mothers ages 35 and older are more common among the foreign born than the native born, and these women are less likely to give birth outside of marriage.

For foreign-born women, rapid decline in childbearing outside of marriage

Births per 1,000 U.S. women ages 15 to 44, by mother's marital status and nativity



Source: Pew Research Center analysis of National Center for Health Statistics data and American Community Survey data (IPUMS).
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3. Foreign-born moms have a different demographic profile than U.S.-born moms, and among the foreign born there are sharp differences tied to region of birth

The differences between foreign-born new mothers and U.S.-born new mothers extend well beyond marital status. In addition to being older than their U.S.-born counterparts, foreign-born mothers have relatively low levels of educational attainment and labor force participation, which may contribute to their lower annual family incomes, and higher rates of poverty. In recent years, while the share of U.S.-born and foreign-born new moms who are Hispanic has converged somewhat, foreign-born new moms are still more than three times as likely to be Hispanic as are U.S.-born new moms (53% vs. 15%).

And *among* foreign-born new mothers, there are significant demographic differences depending on the region of the world where they were born. Those born in Latin America have a very distinct profile: They are younger, less educated, and less well-off financially than their counterparts from most other regions of the world. At the same time, new mothers from Latin America have lived in the U.S. longer, on average, than other foreign-born new mothers. In contrast, the small share of immigrant new mothers who hail from other parts of North America are about six times as likely as those from Latin America to have a bachelor's degree, and they are around twice as likely to have recently immigrated to the U.S. Annual median family incomes among new immigrant mothers from North America (most of whom are from Canada) are about three times those of new moms from Latin America.

Births to foreign-born moms still dominated by those from Latin America, though these shares have been on the decline in recent years

Just over half (54%) of births to foreign-born women in the U.S. in 2014 were to those born in Latin America, with the biggest share – 32% – being moms from Mexico, according to NCHS data.¹⁷ This marks an increase since 1970,¹⁸ when 49% of all foreign-born births were attributed to women from Latin America. However, in recent years, births to moms from Latin America have declined steeply. As recently as 2008, 64% of all births to foreign-born women were to those from Latin America, with 42% of them from Mexico. This drop is due in part to dramatic [declines in migration](#) from that region since the onset of the Great Recession.

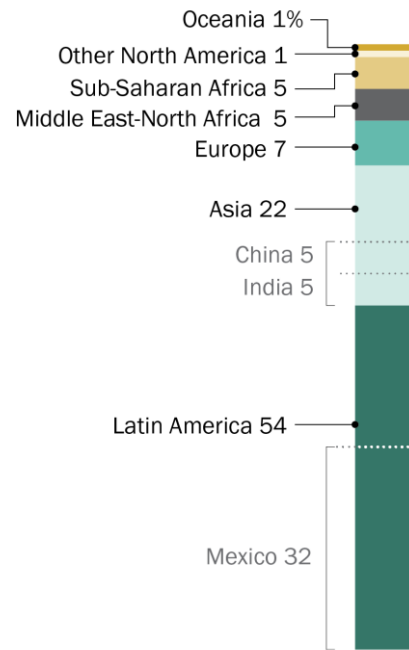
As the share of births to mothers from Latin America has declined in recent years, the share of babies born in the U.S. to immigrant moms from Asia has been on the rise. In 2014, these women accounted for 22% of all births to foreign-born women, up from 16% in 2010.¹⁹ The largest share of births to Asian-born mothers in the U.S. are to those from China and India. Mothers from each of those countries account for about 5% of all births to foreign-born mothers.

Mothers from other regions of the world account for much smaller shares of foreign-born births in the U.S. Those originally from Europe account for 7% of births to foreign-born women, with the largest share coming from mothers born in Eastern Europe. Some 5% of births to foreign-born women are to those born in sub-Saharan Africa, and another 5% are to those born in the Middle East or North Africa. Just 1% of births to foreign-born women are to those from North America or from Oceania.

For the most part, the variation in births to foreign-born mothers by their region of birth reflects the larger population distribution in the U.S. According to U.S. Census Bureau data, about 56% of

Latin American women are responsible for bulk of births to foreign born

% of U.S. births to mothers who are foreign born, by mother's region of birth, 2014



Note: Births to mothers whose region of birth is unknown are not shown.
Source: Pew Research Center analysis of National Center for Health Statistics data. "Births outside of marriage decline for immigrant women"

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¹⁷ In fact, Mexican-born mothers account for 7% of all births in the U.S.

¹⁸ 1970 is the first year for which NCHS data regarding maternal country of birth are available.

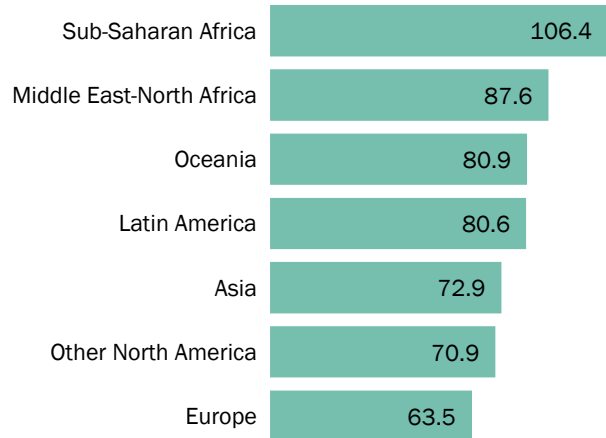
¹⁹ Reliable NCHS data regarding the region of birth for mothers from Asia are not available prior to 2010.

foreign-born women ages 15 to 44 are from Latin America, and 31% are from Mexico in particular. At the same time, 26% of foreign-born women of childbearing age are from Asia. Much smaller shares of foreign-born women of childbearing age come from other parts of the globe.

Birth rates among foreign-born women differ dramatically by region of birth. While the share of U.S. women of childbearing age from sub-Saharan Africa is quite small, this group has the highest birth rate of all – 106.4 births per 1,000 women ages 15 to 44. This is almost twice as high as the rate among U.S.-born women and implies that about 106 of every 1,000 sub-Saharan African women of childbearing age in the U.S. had a baby in the preceding 12 months. At the other end of the spectrum, the birth rate of 63.5 among women originally from Europe is the lowest of all foreign born (but still higher than the rate for U.S.-born women).²⁰

Among U.S. women, those from sub-Saharan Africa have highest birth rates

Births per 1,000 U.S. women ages 15 to 44, by mother's region of birth, 2011-2014



Source: Pew Research Center analysis of American Community Survey data (IPUMS).
 “Births outside of marriage decline for immigrant women”

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²⁰ Birth rates calculated by mother's region of birth are based on a slightly different calculation method than the one used for birth rates by mother's nativity. The two methods produce similar results, but they are not precisely comparable. See Methodology for more details.

Foreign-born moms are older than U.S.-born moms

Since data first became available in 1970, foreign-born new mothers have consistently been older, on average, than their U.S.-born counterparts. According to census data, while 6% of all new U.S.-born mothers were teens in 2014, this share was just 2% among the foreign born. Even more striking – 18% of new U.S.-born mothers were ages 35 or older, compared with 30% of new foreign-born mothers.²¹

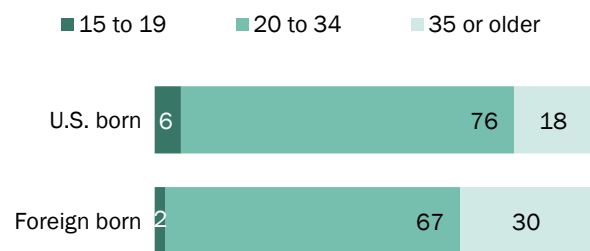
The age difference between foreign-born and U.S.-born new moms is driven, in part, by the fact that foreign-born women of childbearing age are older than their U.S.-born counterparts, and include fewer teens.²² While 18% of U.S.-born women of childbearing age are in their teens, this share is just 7% for the foreign born. And 30% of the U.S. born are ages 35 or older, compared with 44% of the foreign born. Some 51% of U.S.-born women of childbearing age are ages 20-34, versus 48% among the foreign born.

The differences in the age composition of foreign-born and U.S.-born women don't fully explain the nativity differences in the age profiles of new mothers, however. Foreign-born women ages 35 or older are far more

likely to have a baby than their U.S.-born counterparts – birth rates for this group are 50% higher for the foreign born (53.1) than the U.S. born (35.5). Fertility rates are higher for foreign-born women at all other ages, as well, though the differences are not as dramatic: The birth rate for foreign-born teens is 26.6 vs. 19.4 for U.S.-born teens; and among those ages 20-34, the birth rate is 109.4 for the foreign born and 89.1 for the U.S. born.

Compared with U.S.-born new moms, foreign-born moms less likely to be teens, more likely to be ages 35 or older

% of new U.S. mothers who are ages _____, by nativity, 2011-2014



Source: Pew Research Center analysis of American Community survey data (IPUMS).

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²¹ The average age of foreign-born mothers is 31 years, compared with 29 years for U.S.-born mothers.

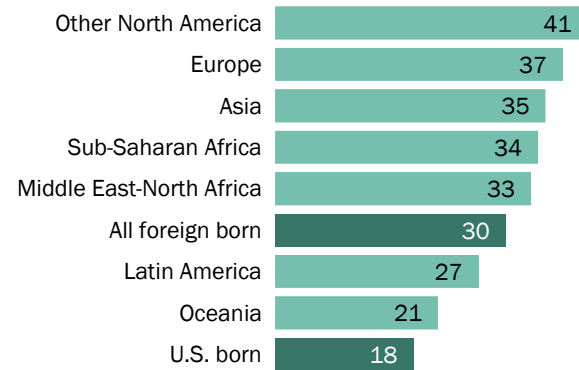
²² The average age of foreign-born women between 15 and 44 years of age is 32, compared with 29 years for U.S.-born mothers.

Among all foreign-born new mothers, those from Latin America are the most likely to be teens – about 4% are. This is slightly lower than the 6% share among U.S.-born mothers. Some 2% of new mothers from sub-Saharan Africa are teens, while the share is 1% or less for mothers from other regions of the world.

At the same time, new mothers from North America are the most likely to be 35 or older – fully 41% are. Some 37% of new mothers from Europe fall into this category. Older mothers are far less common among new immigrant moms from Oceania – just one-in-five (21%) are ages 35 or older. Among new mothers from Latin America, this share is just 27%.

New foreign-born moms from North America, Europe twice as likely as new U.S.-born moms to be ages 35 or older

% of new U.S. mothers who are ages 35 or older, by nativity and region of birth, 2011-2014



Source: Pew Research Center analysis of American Community Survey data (IPUMS).

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Foreign-born moms far more likely than U.S.-born moms to be Hispanic or Asian

Fully 53% of foreign-born new moms are of Hispanic origin versus 15% of new U.S.-born mothers. In contrast, just 12% of immigrant new mothers are white, while whites are the dominant racial and ethnic group among U.S.-born mothers – 65%. Asians account for about one-fourth (24%) of immigrant new moms versus just 2% of the U.S. born. Some 9% of foreign-born new mothers are black, compared with 15% of U.S.-born new moms.

These patterns reflect recent shifts among both U.S.-born and foreign-born new mothers. Since 2008, the share of U.S.-born new mothers who are white dropped by about 3 percentage points, and the share who are Hispanic rose by a similar amount. At the same time, the share of foreign-born new mothers who are Hispanic dropped by about 4 points, while the share that are Asian rose by 3 points.

The racial and ethnic composition of new mothers in the U.S. largely mirrors broader population patterns. Among all U.S.-born women of childbearing age, 66% are white, 15% are black, 13% are Hispanic, and 2% are Asian. Meanwhile, foreign-born women of childbearing age are far more likely to be Hispanic (50%) or Asian (26%), than white (14%) or black (8%).

New foreign-born mothers twice as likely as U.S.-born moms to lack a high school diploma

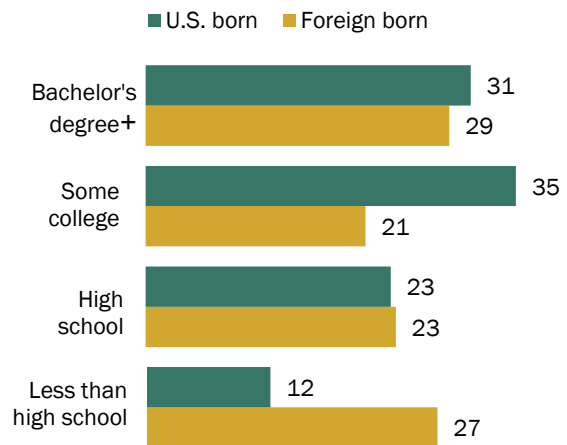
Foreign-born mothers of newborns typically have less education than their U.S.-born counterparts overall. While 12% of U.S.-born mothers lack a high school diploma, this share more than doubles to 27% among the foreign born. And while identical shares (23%) of new mothers in both groups progressed to the point of attaining a high school diploma, U.S. born moms are much more likely to have gone on to at least some college. Overall, about one-third (35%) of U.S.-born mothers have a high school diploma and some college experience (though no bachelor's degree), a share that drops to 21% among the foreign born. When it comes to college completion, nativity differences are relatively small. Some 29% of foreign-born new mothers have earned at least a bachelor's degree, as have 31% of U.S.-born new mothers.

For the most part, nativity differences in the educational attainment of new mothers reflect the nativity differences in education among all women of childbearing age. For example,

while 27% of foreign-born women ages 15 to 44 lack a high school diploma, this share drops to 18% among comparably aged U.S.-born women; and while just 23% of immigrant women of childbearing age have attained some college education, this share rises to 36% for the U.S. born.

New foreign-born moms less likely than U.S.-born to have a high school diploma, but equally likely to have a bachelor's degree

% of new U.S. mothers, by educational attainment and nativity, 2011-2014



Note: "Some college" includes those with a two-year degree and those who attended college but did not obtain a degree.

Source: Pew Research Center analysis of American Community Survey data (IPUMS).

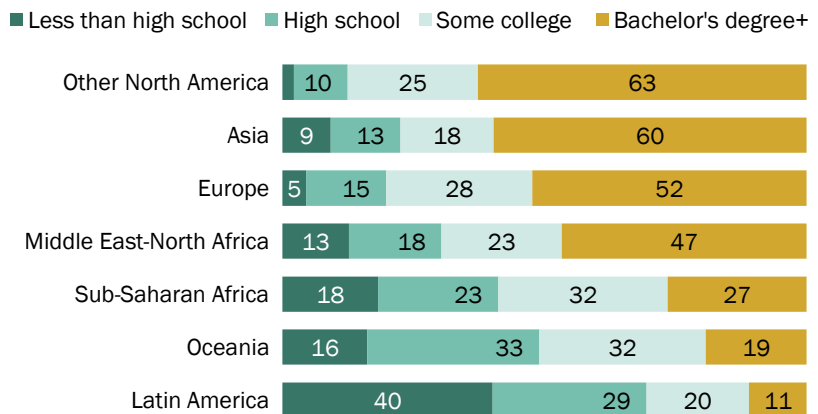
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New mothers originally from Latin America have the lowest level of educational attainment of all immigrant moms. They are by far the most likely to lack a high school diploma (40%), while at the other end of the spectrum just 11% have a bachelor's degree. Conversely, the majority of new mothers originally from North America (63%), Asia (60%) and Europe (52%) have at least a bachelor's degree, and about 10% or less lack a high school diploma. Among new mothers from the Middle East and North Africa, almost half (47%) have a bachelor's degree, and 13% lack a high school diploma.

Educational attainment among new foreign-born moms differs widely by region of birth

% of new foreign-born U.S. mothers, by educational attainment and region of birth, 2011-2014



Note: Categories with 2% or less are shown but not labeled. Values may not add to 100% due to rounding. "Some college" includes those with a two-year degree and those who attended college but did not obtain a degree.

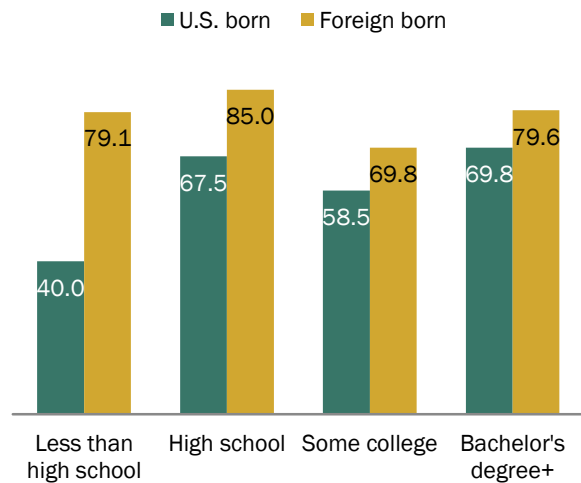
Source: Pew Research Center analysis of American Community Survey data (IPUMS). "Births outside of marriage decline for immigrant women"

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At all levels of educational attainment, birth rates are higher for immigrants than the U.S. born, and this difference is particularly pronounced among women who lack a high school diploma. While the birth rate for U.S.-born women who don't have a diploma is 40.0 births per 1,000 women ages 15 to 44, among comparable immigrant women, the rate virtually doubles to 79.1 births per 1,000. Among U.S.-born women, those with the least education have by far the lowest fertility levels, but this pattern does not hold for immigrants. The birth rate of the least educated immigrant women is about equal to that of foreign-born women with a bachelor's degree (79.6) and is higher than the rate for immigrant women with some college experience (69.8).

Among the less educated, birth rate almost twice as high for foreign born as for U.S. born

Births per 1,000 U.S. women ages 15 to 44, by mother's educational attainment and nativity, 2011-2014



Note: "Some college" includes those with a two-year degree and those who attended college but did not obtain a degree.

Source: Pew Research Center analysis of American Community Survey data (IPUMS).

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New foreign-born mothers are less financially well-off than new U.S.-born mothers

Foreign-born mothers of newborns are far more likely to have low family incomes and to be living in poverty than their U.S.-born counterparts. This may relate, in part, to the fact that foreign-born new mothers are less likely to be employed than their U.S.-born counterparts. There are striking differences in financial well-being *among* foreign-born new mothers. For example, those from Latin America are more than four times as likely to be living in poverty as those from North America.

Foreign-born new moms less likely to be employed, more likely to be out of the labor force than U.S.-born moms

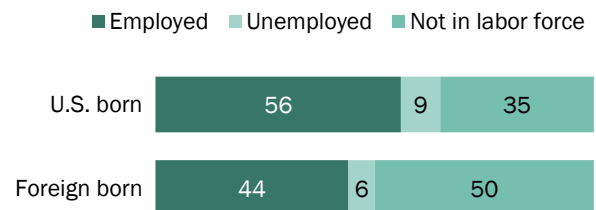
Fully 56% of U.S.-born women who gave birth in the preceding 12 months have a job, versus 44% of comparable foreign-born mothers. Most of the difference in these numbers is driven by the likelihood of being in the labor market. Fully half (50%) of new foreign-born mothers report that they are out of the labor market – meaning they are neither working nor seeking employment – versus 35% of their U.S.-born counterparts.²³

New mothers from the Middle East and North Africa are the least likely to be employed – just 32% are. Among new mothers from Latin America, the employment rate is 39%, and it is 44% for those originally from Oceania. At least half of mothers from Asia (51%), Europe (54%), North America (55%) and sub-Saharan Africa (56%) report that they are employed.

As with the nativity differences, much of the variation in employment by region of birth is driven by differences in labor force participation. However, there are some variations in unemployment by mother’s region of birth. It rises to 10% for those from Oceania, 9% for those from sub-Saharan

Half of new foreign-born moms are out of the labor force

% of new U.S. mothers, by employment status and nativity, 2011-2014



Source: Pew Research Center analysis of American Community Survey data (IPUMS).

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²³ Given that this analysis is based on women who gave birth in the preceding 12 months, these numbers should be reviewed somewhat cautiously. Some new mothers may still be employed even if they are on maternity leave, while others may be outside of the labor force for just a short period around the time of their birth, for instance. It’s also worth noting that some immigrants may be out of the labor force because they are unable to work legally in the U.S.

Africa, and 7% for those from Latin America, while it's about 5% or lower among mothers from other regions.

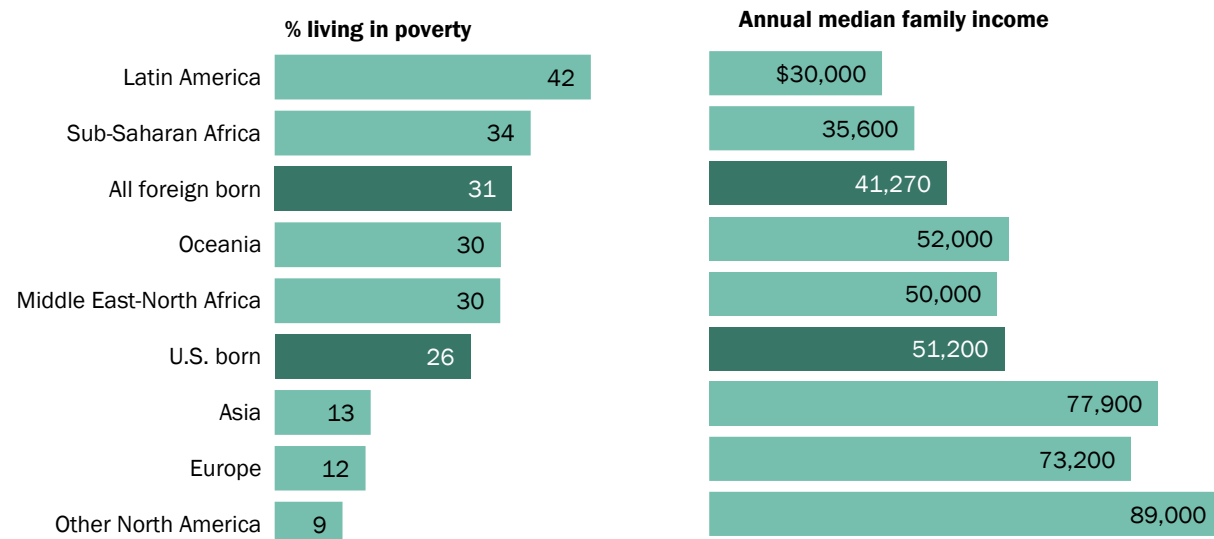
Annual incomes of new foreign-born moms from North America three times those of moms from Latin America

U.S.-born new mothers are better off financially than their foreign-born counterparts, both in terms of median family income and poverty status. The median annual family income for U.S.-born mothers of newborns is about \$51,200, compared with \$41,300 among foreign-born new moms. Perhaps more telling is the poverty rate for each group – while 26% of U.S.-born new mothers are living below the poverty line this share rises to 31% for foreign-born new mothers.

That being said, there is notable variation in economic well-being among new immigrant mothers, depending on where they themselves were born. Foreign-born mothers from other parts of North America boast particularly high median family incomes of almost \$90,000. Those from Asia and Europe also have significantly higher incomes than their U.S.-born counterparts; about \$78,000 for mothers originally from Asia, and \$73,000 for those from Europe.

Among new foreign-born U.S. moms from Latin America, poverty is over four times as high as among those from North America

Financial well-being of new U.S. mothers, by nativity and region of birth, 2011-2014



Source: Pew Research Center analysis of American Community Survey data (IPUMS).
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However, new mothers from sub-Saharan Africa have annual incomes of about \$36,000, and those from Latin America have annual incomes of about \$30,000 – about one-third of the incomes of their foreign-born counterparts from North America.

An analysis of poverty among new mothers reveals a similar pattern. Among foreign-born new mothers, the prevalence of poverty varies dramatically – just 9% of foreign-born new mothers from North America are living below the poverty line, while new mothers from Latin America and sub-Saharan Africa are about four times as likely to be living in poverty (42% and 34% are, respectively).

Half of new foreign-born mothers have been in the U.S. for more than a decade

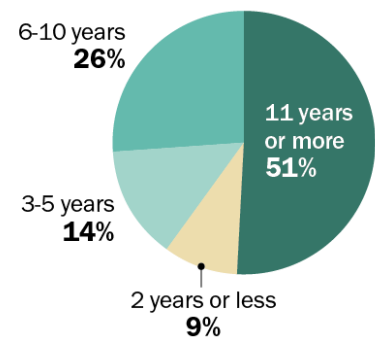
The vast majority of new foreign-born mothers have lived in the U.S. for many years. About three-quarters (77%) of these women have been in the U.S. for six years or more, and fully half (51%) have been in the U.S. for 11 years or more. Some 14% of new foreign-born mothers have been in the U.S. for three to five years, and 9% immigrated within the preceding two years.

To some extent, this pattern reflects the characteristics of all foreign-born women of childbearing age. The majority (60%) have been in the U.S. for 11 or more years, while a much smaller share (9%) are recent arrivals within the preceding two years. Some 10% of foreign-born women of childbearing age have been in the U.S. for three to five years, as have 20% of those who have been in the U.S. for six to 10 years.

Fertility rates are particularly high for foreign-born women who have been in the U.S. for at least three years, but fewer than 11 years.²⁴ Among women ages 15 to 44 who have been in the U.S. for three to five years, the birth rate is 106.5 births per 1,000, and among those women who have been in the U.S. for six to 10 years it is 100.1 births per 1,000. The birth rate for women who were in the U.S. for two years or less is relatively low – 76.2 births per 1,000. Immigrants who have been in the U.S. for 11 years or more have an even lower birth rate (66.5), which may be due in part to the fact that these women are less likely than more recent immigrants to be in the prime

Most foreign-born moms are longtime U.S. residents

% of new foreign-born mothers, by years in the U.S., 2011-2014



Source: Pew Research Center analysis of American Community Survey data (IPUMS). "Births outside of marriage decline for immigrant women"

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²⁴ This jibes with [research](#) on Hispanic immigrants that indicates their fertility rates typically peak about five years after arrival.

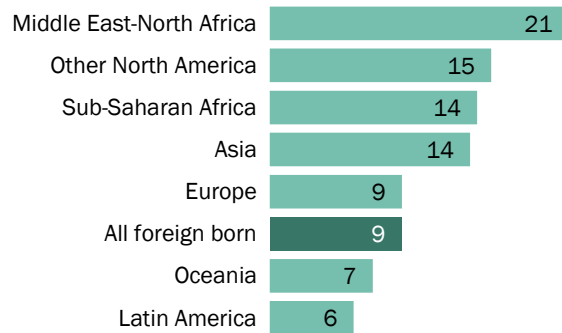
childbearing ages of 20 to 34 years. While 40% of long-term immigrant women are in this age range, 61% of more recent immigrant women are.

The share of births to recent immigrants varies depending on which region of the world the mom hails from originally. Among mothers originally from Latin America, just 6% arrived within the previous two years, while 56% had been living in the U.S. for 11 years or more. The shares of new mothers from Oceania or Europe who are recent immigrants are also quite low – 7% and 9%, respectively.

New mothers from the Middle East and North Africa are far more likely to be recent arrivals – 21% arrived in the U.S. within two years prior to the survey.

New moms from Latin America among least likely to be recent immigrants

% of new mothers who have lived in the U.S. for two years or less, by region of birth, 2011-2014



Source: Pew Research Center analysis of American Community Survey data (IPUMS).

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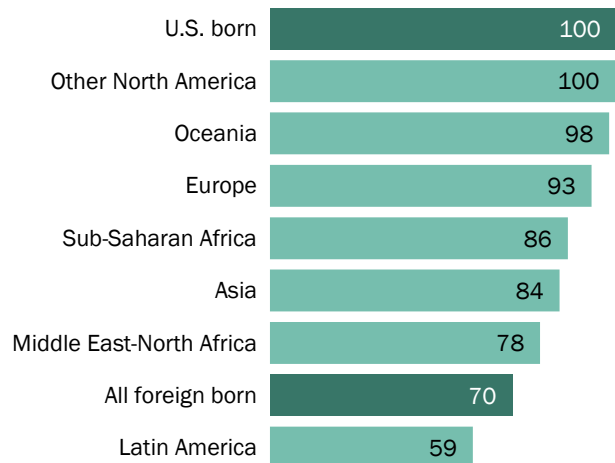
Seven-in-ten new foreign-born moms speak English well

Some 70% of new foreign-born mothers either speak only English in the home or say that they speak English very well or well. Not surprisingly, those foreign-born new mothers who hail from predominantly English-speaking regions of the world – North America and Oceania – boast almost universal English proficiency. Even among new mothers originally from Europe, more than nine-in-ten speak English at least well. The share of moms of newborns who speak English well is considerably lower for those from Latin America, though the majority – 59% – report that they do.

While most foreign-born new mothers are able to communicate at least well in English, many of those who cannot are living in what some researchers term “[linguistically isolated](#)” households in which no person ages 14 or older speaks English at least “very well,” or speaks English at home all the time. All told, 30% of foreign-born mothers are living in this type of arrangement, which is particularly common among moms of newborns from Latin America (37%). Among new mothers from the Middle East and North Africa, 28% are in linguistically isolated households, as are 22% of those from Asia and 21% of those from sub-Saharan Africa. Rates of linguistic isolation are far lower for new moms from other regions – 13% for those from Europe; 10% for those from Oceania; and 1% for those from the remainder of North America.

Majority of new foreign-born mothers speak English well

% of new U.S. mothers who say they speak only English at home or say they speak English “well” or “very well,” by nativity and region of birth, 2011-2014



Source: Pew Research Center analysis of American Community Survey data (IPUMS).

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4. Among foreign-born new moms from top sending locations, big differences in demographic characteristics

While the profile of new mothers varies by the region of the world in which they were born, even more dramatic differences emerge when comparing mothers from the top 10 countries,²⁵ all of which are located in Latin America and Asia. Generally, new mothers from the top Asian countries are more likely to be married, highly educated and well-off financially than their counterparts from Latin America – for instance, marriage is virtually universal among new mothers from India, while fewer than half of those from the Dominican Republic or Puerto Rico are married. That being said, there are differences among new mothers from countries within the same region. Among new mothers from Asia, for example, those from India are more than twice as likely as those from Vietnam to have a bachelor’s degree.

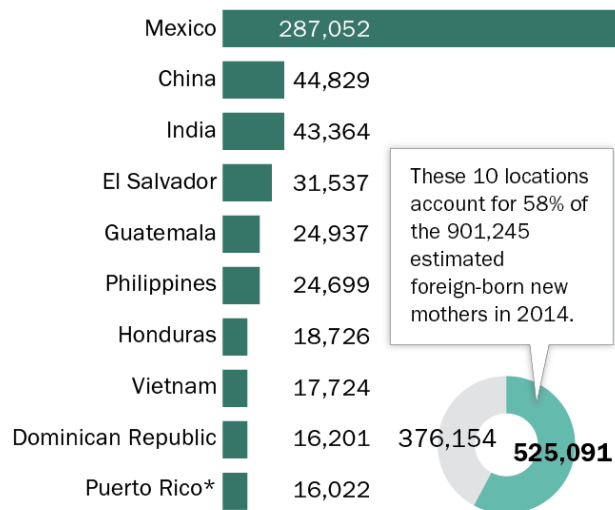
More than half of births to foreign-born women are to those from nine countries and Puerto Rico

Women hailing from just nine countries and one U.S. territory, all of which are located in Latin America and Asia, accounted for more than half (58%) of all births to immigrant mothers in the U.S. in 2014.

Mexico remains by far the dominant country of birth for new foreign-born mothers; about a third (32%) of all babies born to foreign-born mothers are to those who were born in Mexico.²⁶ To put that in perspective, the 287,000 births to Mexican-born women in 2014 outnumbered all births to women from Asia, Europe, North America and Oceania combined. China and India are the next most common origin countries – babies with mothers from these

Births to moms from top 10 locations account for most births to foreign-born new moms

Number of U.S. births to foreign-born mothers, by mother’s birthplace, 2014



*Puerto Rico is a U.S. territory. Women born in Puerto Rico are U.S. citizens, but are classified as “foreign born” in this report. See Terminology for more details.

Source: Pew Research Center analysis of National Center for Health Statistics data.

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²⁵ Nine of these places are countries, and Puerto Rico is a U.S. territory. See Terminology for more details.

²⁶ And in fact, 7% of all U.S. births are to women who were born in Mexico.

countries each account for 5% of births to the foreign born. Babies born to mothers originally from El Salvador, Guatemala and the Philippines account for 3% each; and those from Honduras, Vietnam, the Dominican Republic and Puerto Rico each account for about 2% of births to foreign-born mothers.

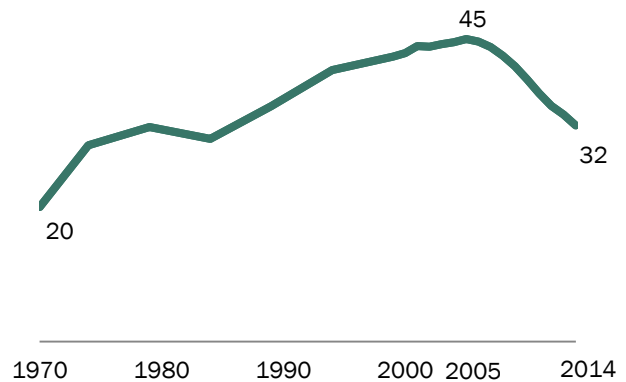
While Mexico has remained by far the most common country of birth for new foreign-born mothers in the U.S., the 32% of births to foreign-born mothers from this location in 2014 represents a fairly dramatic decline since 2005, when fully 45% of all babies born to foreign-born mothers were to those from Mexico.

A likely factor driving this recent decline is the dramatic impact that the Great Recession seemed to have on the fertility of Mexican-born women in the U.S. – their birth rates [plummeted](#) by 23% from 2007 to 2010. In comparison the overall U.S. birth rate dropped by 8% during that time, and the birth rate among all U.S. immigrants dropped by 14%. Meanwhile, the share of Mexican-born women of childbearing age in the U.S. dropped slightly, as [overall Mexican immigration](#) to the U.S. receded.

While the short-term decline in the share of foreign-born births to Mexican moms has been dramatic, in the long term, the share of births to Mexican-born mothers has risen substantially; it was 20% in 1970, when data first became available.

After more than doubling, share of births to Mexican-born moms on the decline

U.S. births to Mexican-born women, as share of all U.S. births to foreign-born women (%)



Source: Pew Research Center analysis of National Center for Health Statistics data.

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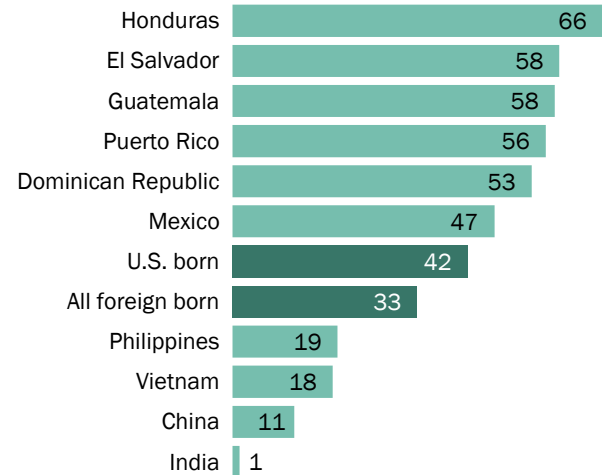
Marriage rates vary widely among mothers by birthplace

The likelihood of being unmarried varies significantly among new mothers from the top 10 sending locations. On the one hand, just 1% of new mothers from India are unmarried, according to NCHS data. Births outside of marriage are also quite uncommon for new mothers from the other top sending countries in Asia: 11% of new mothers from China are unmarried, as are 18% from Vietnam and 19% from the Philippines.

On the other hand, two-thirds of births to women from Honduras are to unmarried mothers. More than half of births to women from most other Latin American countries also occur outside of marriage. The exception is among women from Mexico: 47% of births to Mexican immigrants occur outside of marriage, a rate slightly higher than among births to U.S.-born mothers who are unmarried (42%).

Virtually all births to Indian moms occur within marriage

% of U.S. births to mothers who are unmarried, by mother's nativity and birthplace, 2014



Note: Puerto Rico is a U.S. territory. Women born in Puerto Rico are U.S. citizens, but are classified as "foreign born" in this report. See Terminology for more details.

Source: Pew Research Center analysis of National Center for Health Statistics data.

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Almost half of new mothers from Vietnam are ages 35 or older

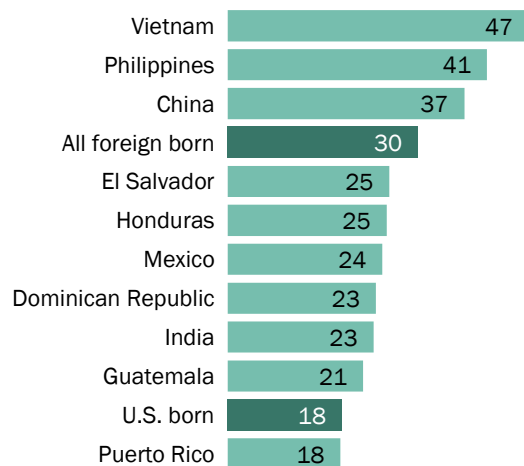
Foreign-born women who gave birth within the preceding 12 months are older, on average, than their U.S.-born counterparts – some 30% are ages 35 or older, compared with 18% among the U.S. born. Foreign-born new mothers originally from Vietnam (47%), the Philippines (41%) and China (37%) are particularly likely to be in this age range. Some 23% of new mothers from India are ages 35 or older – far below the shares found among new mothers from the other major Asian sending countries.

Mothers from major Latin American sending countries are less likely than foreign-born moms overall to be ages 35 or older. About one-fourth of new mothers from El Salvador (25%), Honduras (25%), Mexico (24%) and the Dominican Republic (23%) are at least 35 years old. Some 21% of new mothers from Guatemala are in this age range, as are 18% of those from Puerto Rico.

Mothers from Puerto Rico are about as likely as U.S.-born new mothers to be teenagers (7% vs. 6%). Teen mothers are less prevalent among those from other countries. The share reaches 4% among mothers originally from Mexico and the Dominican Republic, and 3% for mothers from El Salvador. Just 2% of those from Honduras and Guatemala are teen moms, and among new mothers from the remaining countries, the share is 1% or less.

Almost half of new mothers from Vietnam are ages 35 or older

% of new foreign-born U.S. mothers who are ages 35 and older, by nativity and birthplace, 2011-2014



Note: Puerto Rico is a U.S. territory. Women born in Puerto Rico are U.S. citizens, but are classified as “foreign born” in this report. See Terminology for more details.

Source: Pew Research Center analysis of American Community Survey data (IPUMS).

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New moms from India are, by far, the most likely to have bachelor's degree and to be financially well-off

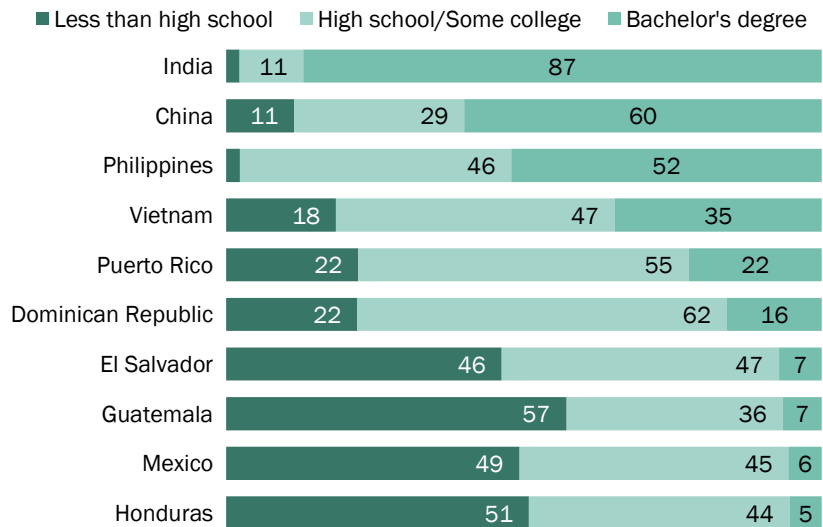
Among foreign-born women who gave birth in the preceding 12 months, educational attainment parallels financial well-being. New moms from India stand out on both measures – almost nine-in-ten (87%) have a bachelor's degree, and their annual median incomes top \$100,000. In contrast, new mothers from Honduras and Guatemala stand out as well – at least half lack a high school diploma, and about half are living in poverty.

The Indian case is particularly extreme – none of the other top sending countries come close in terms of the share of new moms with a bachelor's degree. Some six-in-ten new mothers from China and about half from the Philippines (52%) have this credential. About a third of new mothers from Vietnam (35%) have a bachelor's degree, while 18% lack a high school diploma.

New mothers from each of the primary Latin American sending countries are less likely than new U.S.-born mothers (31%) to have a bachelor's degree, and more likely than the U.S. born (12%) to lack a high school diploma. About one-fifth (22%) of new Puerto Rican-born mothers have a bachelor's degree, and an equal share lack a high school diploma. The same share of new mothers from the Dominican Republic lack a high school diploma. Among new mothers from the remaining countries, it is far more common to lack a high school diploma than to

Well over half of new moms from India and China have a bachelor's degree

% of new foreign-born U.S. mothers who have _____ education, by birthplace, 2011-2014



Note: Categories with 2% or less are not labeled. "Some college" includes those with a two-year degree and those who attended college but did not obtain a degree. Puerto Rico is a U.S. territory. Women born in Puerto Rico are U.S. citizens, but are classified as "foreign born" in this report. See Terminology for more details.

Source: Pew Research Center analysis of American Community Survey data (IPUMS). "Births outside of marriage decline for immigrant women"

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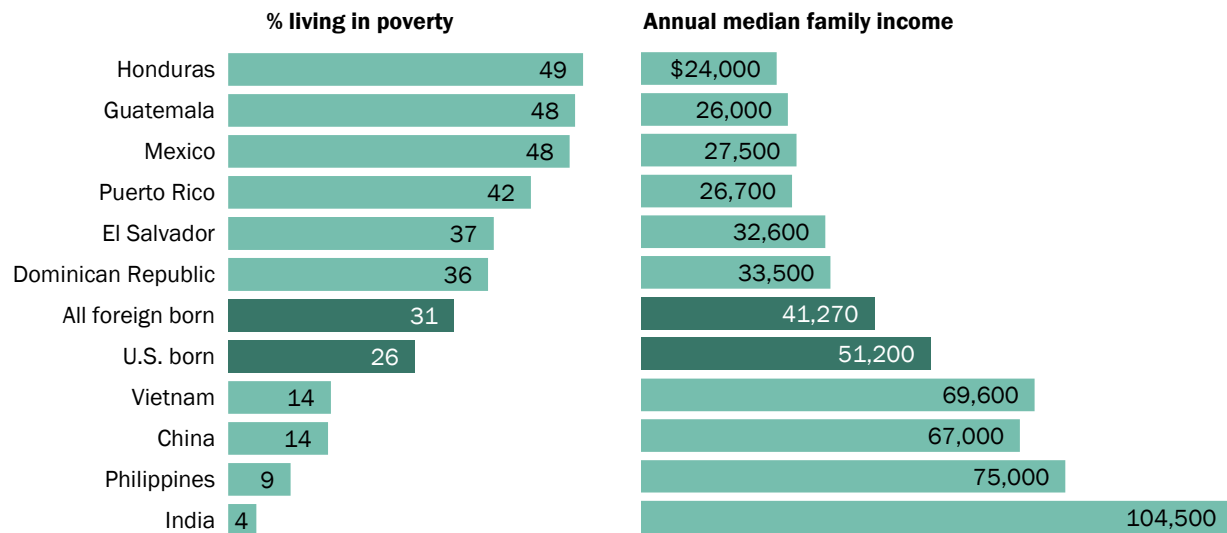
possess a bachelor's degree.

In terms of financial well-being, Indian-born new mothers have annual median family incomes more than twice as high (\$104,500) as new U.S.-born mothers (\$51,200). At the other end of the financial spectrum, just 4% of Indian-born new mothers are in poverty, compared with 26% of U.S.-born mothers.

New mothers from the Philippines, Vietnam and China are also relatively well-off. Those from the Philippines have annual incomes of about \$75,000, those from Vietnam have incomes of about \$70,000, and those from China have incomes of about \$67,000. Poverty rates for new mothers from these countries range from 9% to 14%.

Among new U.S. moms from Honduras, poverty is 12 times as high as that of new U.S. moms from India

Financial well-being of new U.S. mothers, by nativity and birthplace, 2011-2014



Note: Puerto Rico is a U.S. territory. Women born in Puerto Rico are U.S. citizens, but are classified as “foreign born” in this report. See Terminology for more details.

Source: Pew Research Center analysis of American Community Survey data (IPUMS).

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New mothers from the remaining countries, all located in Latin America, are less well-off than new U.S.-born mothers and new foreign-born mothers overall. Those from the Dominican Republic have incomes of about \$33,500 a year, and those from El Salvador have incomes of about \$32,600. Some 36% of those from the Dominican Republic are living in poverty, as are 37% of those from El Salvador. Incomes dip below \$30,000 among new mothers from the remaining locations, and poverty is relatively high. Some 42% of new moms from Puerto Rico are living in poverty, while about half of those from Mexico (48%), Guatemala (48%) and Honduras (49%) are.

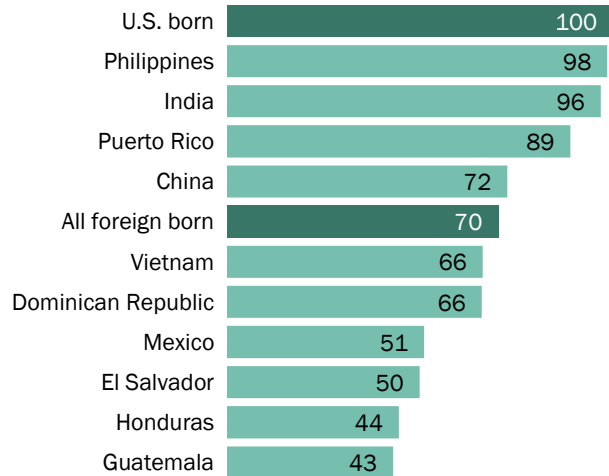
About four-in-ten new moms from Guatemala are English-proficient

More than nine-in-ten mothers of newborns from the Philippines and India are English-proficient, meaning they speak English “well” or better. New moms from Puerto Rico are also highly likely to be English-proficient – 89% are.

Rates of proficiency decline substantially for new mothers from the remaining countries of birth. The share is 72% for those from China, and two-thirds (66%) of new mothers from Vietnam and the Dominican Republic speak English at least “well.” About half of new moms from Mexico (51%) and El Salvador (50%) are English-proficient, as are 44% of those from Honduras and 42% of those from Guatemala.

About 4-in-10 new moms from Guatemala are English-proficient

% of new U.S. mothers who say they speak only English at home or say they speak English “well” or “very well,” by nativity and birthplace, 2011-2014



Note: Puerto Rico is a U.S. territory. Women born in Puerto Rico are U.S. citizens, but are classified as “foreign born” in this report. See Terminology for more details.

Source: Pew Research Center analysis of American Community Survey data (IPUMS).

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Gretchen Livingston, *Senior Researcher*

Kim Parker, *Director, Social Trends Research*

Claudia Deane, *Vice President of Research*

D’Vera Cohn, *Senior Writer*

Anna Brown, *Research Analyst*

Molly Rohal, *Communications Manager*

Michael Keegan, *Information Graphics Designer*

Shannon Greenwood, *Associate Digital Producer*

Marcia Kramer, *Kramer Editing Services*

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Methodology

Datasets

Analyses in this report are primarily based on two sources: vital statistics data regarding births in the U.S., available from the National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS), and data regarding women ages 15 to 49 who gave birth in the U.S. in the preceding 12 months, available from the U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey (ACS). Data from the decennial census and the American Community Survey are also used to estimate characteristics of all women of childbearing age.

The NCHS data regarding mother's nativity extend back to 1970 and reflect information extracted from completed birth certificates for live births, which include the mother's characteristics at the time of the birth. The bulk of these tabulations are based on all births occurring in the 50 states and the District of Columbia within a calendar year. The exception is for rate calculations, which use NCHS data only for births to women who report that they are residents of the U.S. It is necessary to add this constraint to rate calculations, so that the NCHS data will more closely match up with the ACS and census data used for the denominator.²⁷

Most of the NCHS data used in the report is available at:

http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data_access/vitalstatsonline.htm. The report also used restricted NCHS data files. Details on obtaining those restricted data are available at:

http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/nvss/dvs_data_release.htm.

The ACS, which is an annual, nationally representative survey, began collecting data on the entire residential population of the U.S. in 2006. It includes a question identifying women who gave birth in the preceding 12 months, which is used to identify new mothers for this analysis. Most ACS-based analyses in this report use a file that combines 2011, 2012, 2013 and 2014 data, in order to produce sample sizes big enough to allow for analyses by nativity and location of birth for foreign-born recent mothers. However, ACS-based analyses focusing on change over time use single-year files.

While analyses suggest that the ACS and NCHS produce generally similar results in terms of mother's nativity and marital status, there are some additional differences between the two data sources worth noting:

²⁷ In 2014, some 0.25% of all births recorded in the NCHS data were to women who said they were not U.S. residents.

- While the NCHS data are based on mother’s characteristics at the time of the birth, the ACS data are based on the mother’s characteristics at the time of the survey, which could be up to 12 months after the birth.
- The ACS asks about births since the same month in the prior year – for instance, someone completing the survey in August 2015 would be asked if she had given birth at any time during the period August 2014 through August 2015. As a result, ACS fertility results are based on slightly more than 12 months of data, while the NCHS is reporting on exactly 12 months of data.

Information regarding the composition of the female population of childbearing age (15 to 44) is derived from the decennial census for 1970, 1980, 1990 and 2000, and from the American Community Survey for all subsequent years.

All ACS and decennial census data were obtained from IPUMS-USA, University of Minnesota, ipums.org.

In analyses based on the NCHS, the ACS and the decennial census, individuals who were born in U.S. territories, including Puerto Rico, are classified as “foreign born.” While individuals born in Puerto Rico and other U.S. territories are U.S. citizens by birth, the convention of categorizing persons living in the U.S. who were born in U.S. territories as foreign-born has been used by both the United Nations and by NCHS in its online VitalStats data tabulator.

Birth rates

The measure of birth rate used in this report is the general fertility rate (GFR), which is the number of births divided by the number of women of childbearing age in a given year. For all birth rate measurements in this report, the denominator includes a count of women ages 15 to 44, derived from the decennial census and ACS.²⁸ For birth rates based on marital status, the small share of women who are classified as “separated” in census and American Community Survey data are grouped with unmarried mothers.²⁹ The birth rate numerators vary somewhat: overall rates by nativity and rates by nativity and marital status use NCHS data regarding births to resident women in a given year.³⁰ NCHS data are necessary for these trend analyses, since they are the only source of birth data that extends back several decades. The numerators for other rates are

²⁸ In 2014, [99.7% of births](#) were to females ages 15 to 44.

²⁹ Some 2% of new mothers in the 2014 American Community Survey were separated when they were surveyed.

³⁰ These rate calculations may differ somewhat from those in NCHS publications, because NCHS typically uses a denominator based on census population estimates, as opposed to one based on decennial census or ACS data.

calculated based on all women ages 15 to 49 who had a birth in the prior year, according to ACS data.

Definitions

Mexico is included in the Latin America region. China includes Macau, but not Taiwan or Hong Kong. In the 2014 National Center for Health Statistics data, mother's country of birth could not be determined in 5% of the cases.

Region definitions

Other North America

Canada
Bermuda
Greenland

Latin America

Mexico
Central America
South America
Cuba
Dominican Republic
Haiti
Jamaica
Puerto Rico
Bahamas
West Indies, other
Caribbean, other

Europe

Northern Europe
United Kingdom & Ireland
Western Europe
Central/Eastern Europe
Southern Europe

Middle East-North Africa

United Arab Emirates
Bahrain
Cyprus
Iran
Israel
Iraq
Jordan
Kuwait
Lebanon
Oman
Qatar
Saudi Arabia
Syria
Turkey
Yemen
Azerbaijan
Armenia
Georgia
Algeria
Egypt
Libya
Morocco
Sudan
Tunisia
Western Sahara

Sub-Saharan Africa

All African nations except those in North Africa

Asia

Bhutan
Sri Lanka
India
Afghanistan
Maldives
Turkmenistan
Pakistan
Bangladesh
Kyrgyzstan
Kazakhstan
Nepal
Tajikistan
Uzbekistan
Philippines
Indonesia
Southeast Asia, other
East Asia, other

Oceania

Australia
New Zealand
Guam
Samoa
Papua New Guinea
Pacific islands, other