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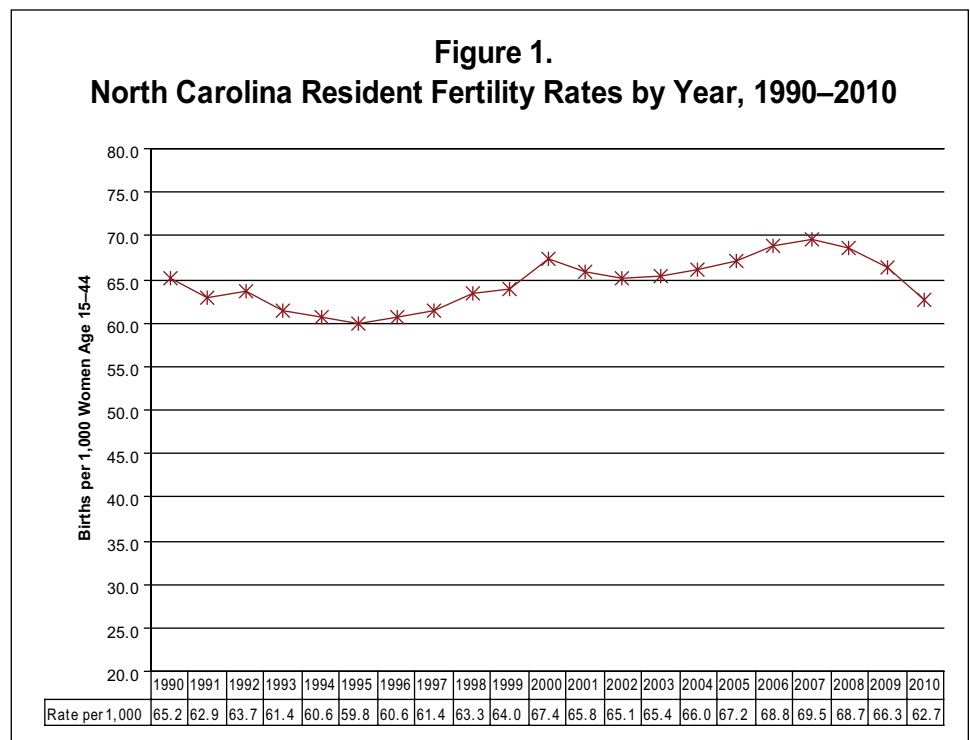
Recent Decline in Births in North Carolina, 2007–2010

by
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The number of births in North Carolina reached an all-time high of 130,886 resident births in 2007. However, since then, North Carolina has experienced a steady decrease in births. From 2007 to 2010, births fell 6.5 percent to 122,302. This closely mirrors national trends. The number of births in the United States reached an all time high of 4,316,233 in 2007, but that number has decreased to 4,000,279 in 2010, 7.3 percent less than 2007.¹⁻³ Fertility rates (the number of live births per 1,000 women of reproductive age [15–44]) also decreased during this time.

This report presents more detailed information regarding the current decline in births and fertility rates by maternal demographics, pregnancy characteristics and geography.

From 2007 to 2010, the fertility rate fell 9.8 percent from 69.5 to 62.7 births per 1,000 women ages 15–44 (**Figure 1**). This was a more rapid decline than any other three year period going back to 1990. With the



exception of a 3.4 percent decline from 2000–2002, the fertility rate between 1995 and 2007 had been increasing.

There was a decline in birth rates from 2007 to 2010 for women in all age groups, the only exception being mothers ages 40 and over (**Figure 2**). For that age group, the rate increased 5 percent. The largest decrease was among women ages 15–19 (from 48.9 to 38.3 births per 1,000 women, a decrease of over 21 percent). The 2010 North Carolina teen birth rate was 10 percent higher than the national rate (34.3 births per 1,000 women); however, the 21 percent decrease in North Carolina was greater than the 17 percent decline nationally from 2007 to 2010.⁴ The percentage decrease in birth rates declined as the age of the mother increased.

From 2007 to 2010, fertility rates dropped for all race/ethnicity groups (**Figure 3**). The largest decrease was among Hispanic women, falling nearly 42 percent from

2007 to 2010. The Hispanic 15–19 age group declined 49 percent. The fertility rate for non-Hispanic white women, which accounted for nearly 55 percent of all North Carolina resident births, declined 3.7 percent.

As shown in **Figure 4**, birth rates declined from 2007–2010 for all birth orders. Birth order is defined as the sum of all previous deliveries (live births, spontaneous miscarriages, induced abortions and the present live birth). The first birth rate for women ages 15–44 fell 5 percent and the second-order birth rate fell just over 11 percent.

County-specific fertility rates in 2010 were lower than 2007 for 89 of North Carolina’s 100 counties (**Figure 5**). The size of the decline varied widely from 34 percent in Washington County to less than 1 percent in Pamlico County. Eleven counties showed an increase during this time period, the highest increase occurring in Clay County, which experienced an increase of 15.2 percent.

Figure 2.
Percentage Change in North Carolina Birth Rates
by Age of Mother, 2007–2010

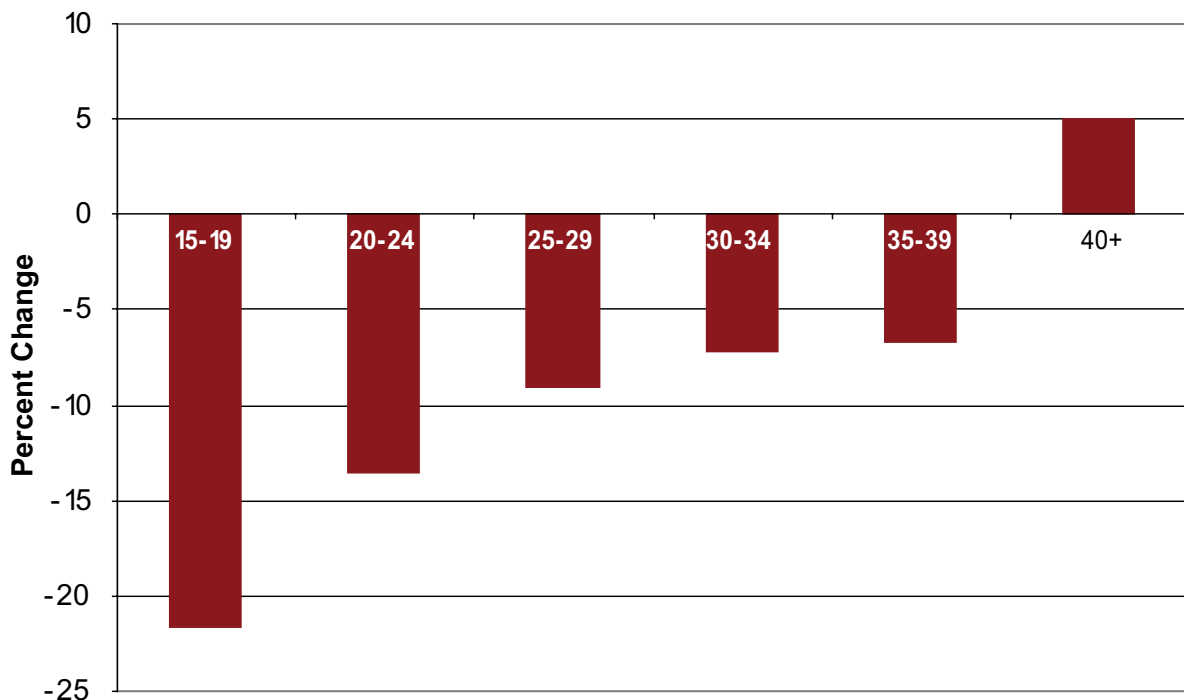


Figure 3.
Percentage Change in North Carolina Fertility Rates
by Race and Ethnicity, 2007–2010

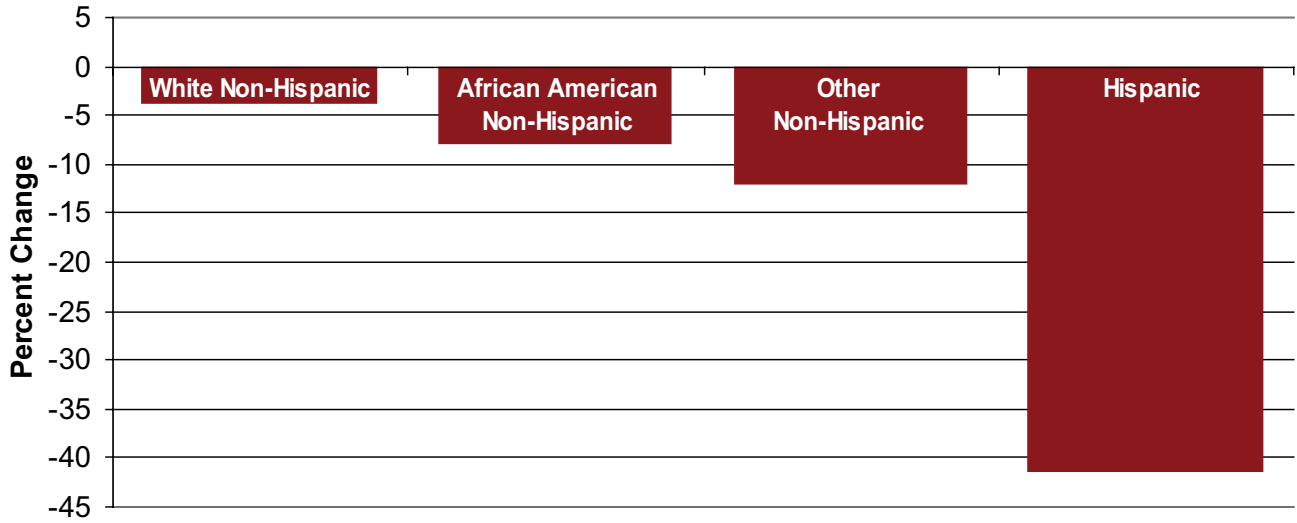


Figure 4.
Percentage Change in North Carolina Birth Rates
by Birth Order, 2007–2010

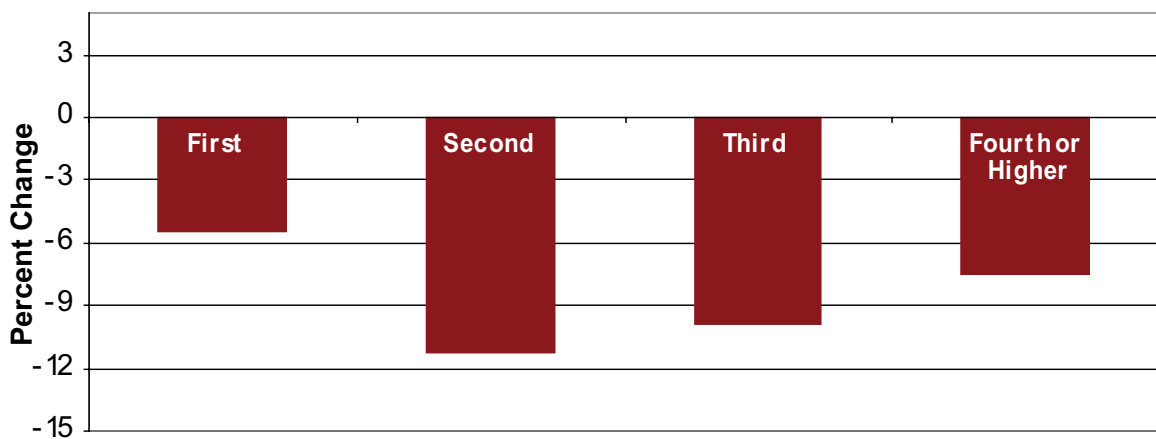
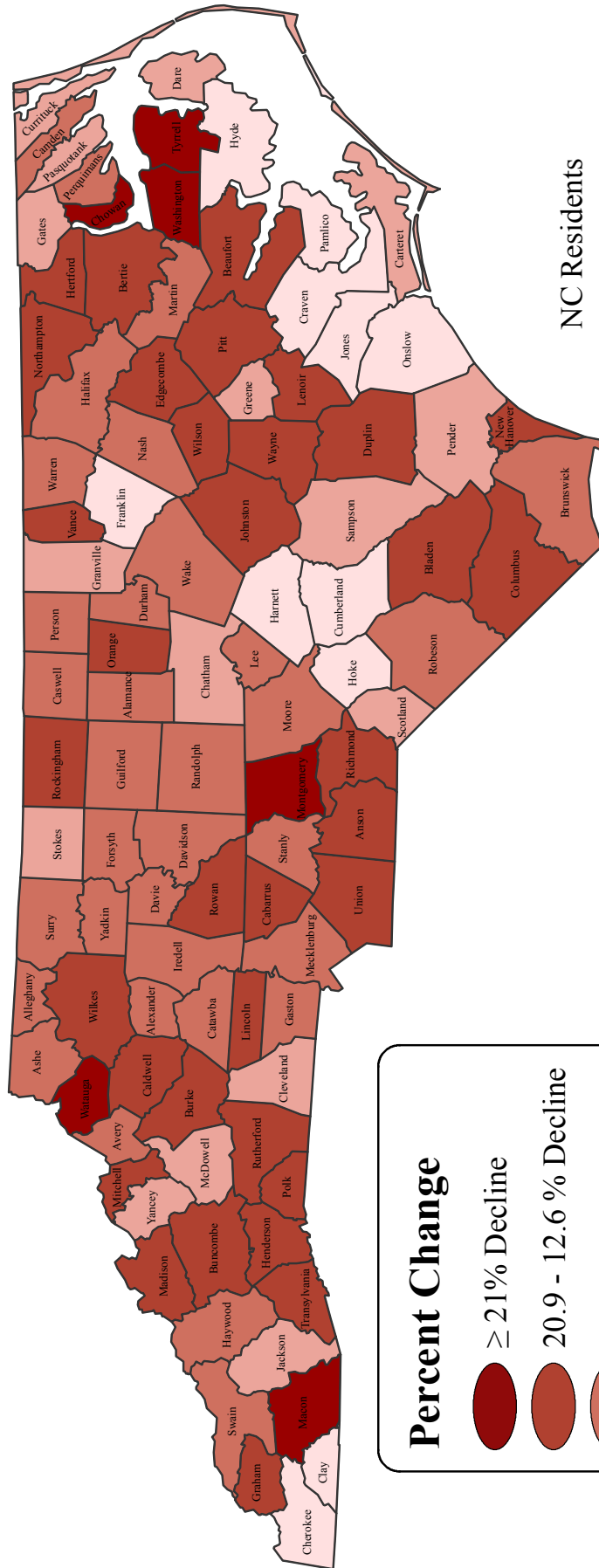


Figure 5: Percent Change in Fertility Rates by County North Carolina, 2007 and 2010



Percent Change

- ≥ 21% Decline
- 20.9 - 12.6 % Decline
- 12.5 - 6.5 % Decline
- 6.4 - 0.0 % Decline
- Increase
- County Boundaries

NC Residents

Summary

Similar to trends found across the country, births in North Carolina began to decline in 2008. Fertility rates in North Carolina fell nearly 10 percent from 2007 to 2010, to 62.7 births per 1,000 women aged 15–44. Rates fell across all age groups under the age of 40. While there were substantial differences among the size of the decrease across the race/ethnicity and birth order categories, each group showed a decline in rates. The vast majority (89 percent) of North Carolina counties also experienced declining fertility rates.

Data from birth certificates alone are insufficient to explain the recent downturn in fertility rates. However, recent research has shown a correlation between the fertility rate decline and the economic recession,⁵ as well as women reporting that they postponed having a child because of the recession.⁶

Definitions

Fertility rate: The number of live births per 1,000 women of reproductive age in specified group.

Birth rate by age of mother: The number of live births per 1,000 women in specified age group.

Birth rate by live-birth order: The number of live births of the specified birth order per 1,000 women age 15–44.

Data Sources

Numerators for rates used in this report are derived from North Carolina electronic birth certificate computer files. Population denominators for rates presented in this report utilize the National Center for Health Statistics Bridged population estimates, available at: www.cdc.gov/nchs/nvss/bridged_race.htm.

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