

Report: Births decline in pandemic may have turned corner

September 21 2021, by Mike Schneider



In this April 6, 2020 file photo, cots and cribs are arranged at the Mountain America Expo Center in Sandy, Utah, as an alternate care site or for hospital overflow amid the COVID-19 pandemic. Although there has been a decline in births in the U.S. during the pandemic, a new report released Tuesday, Sept. 21, 2021 by the U.S. Census Bureau suggests the drop may have turned a corner as births started rebounding last March. Credit: AP Photo/Rick Bowmer, file

While there has been a decline in births in the U.S. during the pandemic, a new report released Tuesday by the U.S. Census Bureau suggests the drop may have turned a corner last March as births started rebounding.

The decline in births was most noticeable at the end of 2020 and beginning of 2021. In December 2020, births in the U.S. were down 7.7% from the previous year, and they were down 9.4% last January compared to the previous January.

Births continued to be down 2.8% in February from the previous year, but in March births barely declined, only 0.15%, compared to March 2020, when the new coronavirus was declared a [national emergency](#).

"This trend suggests that some people who postponed having babies last year had them this year," said Anne Morse, a Census Bureau demographer in the report. "The winter decrease in births may have been prompted by couples who consciously chose to delay having children amid the uncertainty of the [pandemic](#). It may also have been influenced by stress or limited physical interaction with a [sexual partner](#)."

U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [reported in May](#) that U.S. [birth](#) rate fell 4% last year, the largest single-year decrease in nearly 50 years.

The U.S. isn't alone in experiencing declines in births, followed by a slight rebound in the early part of 2021, according to the report. Twenty-one out of 30 countries with available monthly data had fewer births in December 2020 than in 2019 but more births in March 2021 than in March 2020.

Spain had more births in March 2021 than in March 2020, and Germany had more births in March 2021 than in any other March in the past 20 years. The report noted, though, that different countries have different

seasonal cycles for births. In the U.S., births typically increase in the spring and peak in the summer, but then they decline in the fall and are lowest in the winter.

It's still probably too soon to determine if births will still go in an upward year-over-year projection given the herky-jerky nature of pandemic recovery. After all, the babies born in the U.S. last March were likely conceived in June 2020 when spring lockdowns seemed to be easing up. But that optimism was soon met with the summer surge of 2020.

"It is still too soon to make broad conclusions about the pandemic's effect on U.S. birth trends," the report said. "But the data so far indicate there was a temporary drop in births amid the pandemic after accounting for other factors that existed before the pandemic—declining births and seasonality."

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