Fact Sheet
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Kem C. Gardner POLICY INSTITUTE
THE UNIVERSITY OF UTAH
DAVID ECCLES SCHOOL OF BUSINESS

Utah's Declining Fertility Rates

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Fertility in the U.S. and Utah has steadily declined almost every year since the Great Recession in 2008. Final 2021 data revealed that the U.S. Total Fertility Rate (TFR) increased for the first time since 2014, along with 29 other states and Washington D.C. However, Utah's TFR remained the same at 1.9.[1]

Key Findings

- **The U.S. TFR increased by 1% to 1.66 children per woman (up from 1.64) –** Between 2020 and 2021, the TFR increased by over 1% in Washington D.C. and 29 states. Only two states saw a TFR decline of over 1%, with the remaining states experiencing very little change in their TFR.
- **Utah's 2021 TFR remains 4th highest in the nation –** Utah's TFR of 1.918 is behind South Dakota, North Dakota, and Nebraska.[2] Between 2020 and 2021, Utah's TFR remained about the same, declining by .003. This is the first time since 2012 that Utah's TFR did not decline by a substantial amount (1% or more). Utah's TFR has declined an average of 2.2% every year since 2009 (ranging from more than 5% to very small changes), but it only declined by .1% this year.[3]

Utah's age specific fertility rates (ASFRs) typically decline across every age category, but in 2021 this did not occur. Utah's ASFR for its peak childbearing age of 25-29 saw a sizeable increase, preventing Utah's TFR from declining at its normal rate. This is the first time since 2012 that this age group has experienced an increase in Utah. Most other age groups saw ASFR declines (except for ages 35-39 and 45-59).

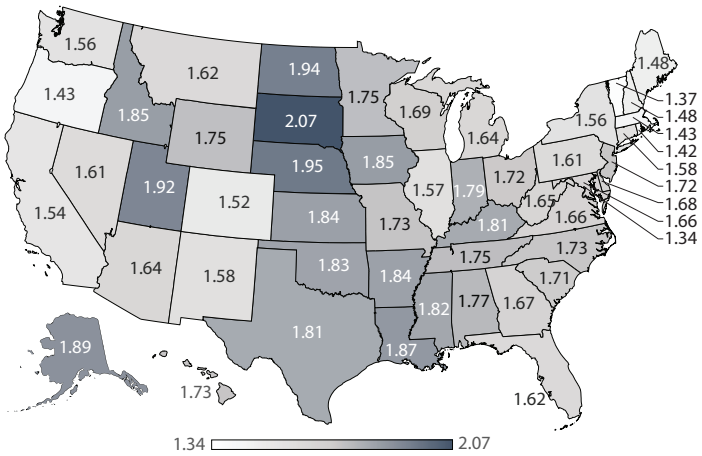
Common Fertility Measures and Terminology

Total Fertility Rate (TFR): The average number of children a woman will have if she survives all her childbearing (or reproductive) years. Also the sum of the Age Specific Fertility Rates.

Age Specific Fertility Rate (ASFR): The number of live births (often per 1,000 women) in a specific age group for a specific point in time, usually a year.

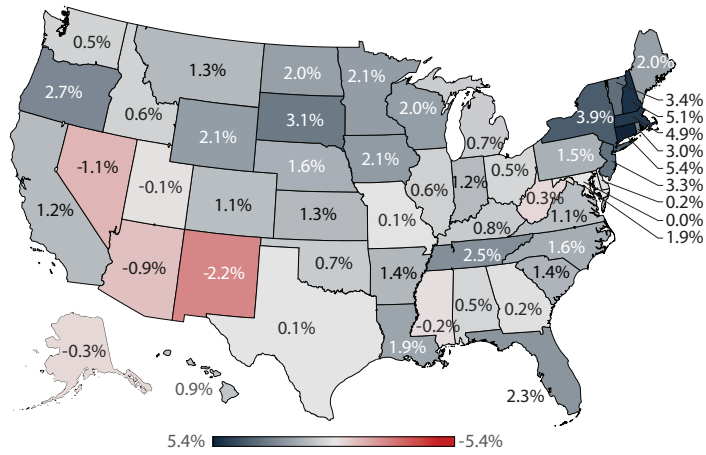
Childbearing years: Ages 15 to 49 years in this report.

Figure 1. Total Fertility Rates by State, 2021



Source: National Center for Health Statistics

Figure 2. Total Fertility Rate Annual Percent Change, 2020-2021

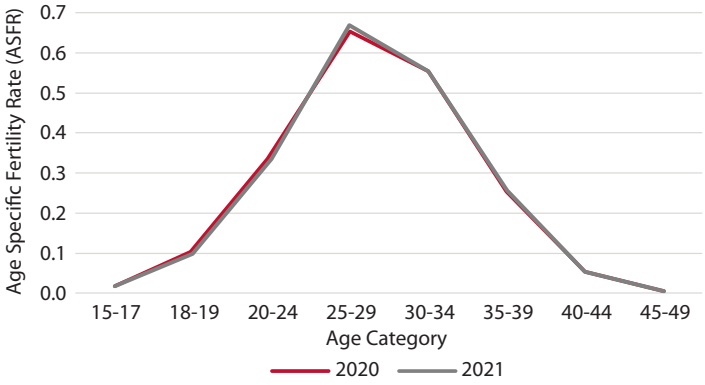


Source: National Center for Health Statistics

A Decade of Fertility Declines

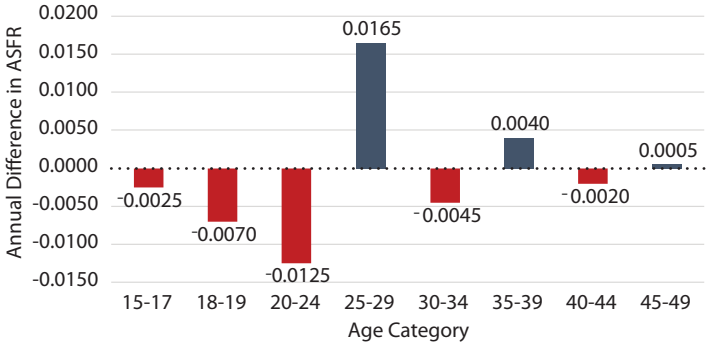
Over the last few years, Utah has dropped its title of the highest fertility rate in the nation, going from the highest in 2015 to 4th highest in 2021. All states in the U.S. experienced fertility rate declines from 2010-2020,. The reductions ranged from 5% to almost 24%. Utah's fertility rate declined by nearly 22% from 2010-2020 but still maintained a high fertility rate compared to other states—4th highest in the nation and the highest compared to the other Intermountain West and Pacific states.[4]

Figure 3: Utah Age Specific Fertility Rates, 2020 and 2021



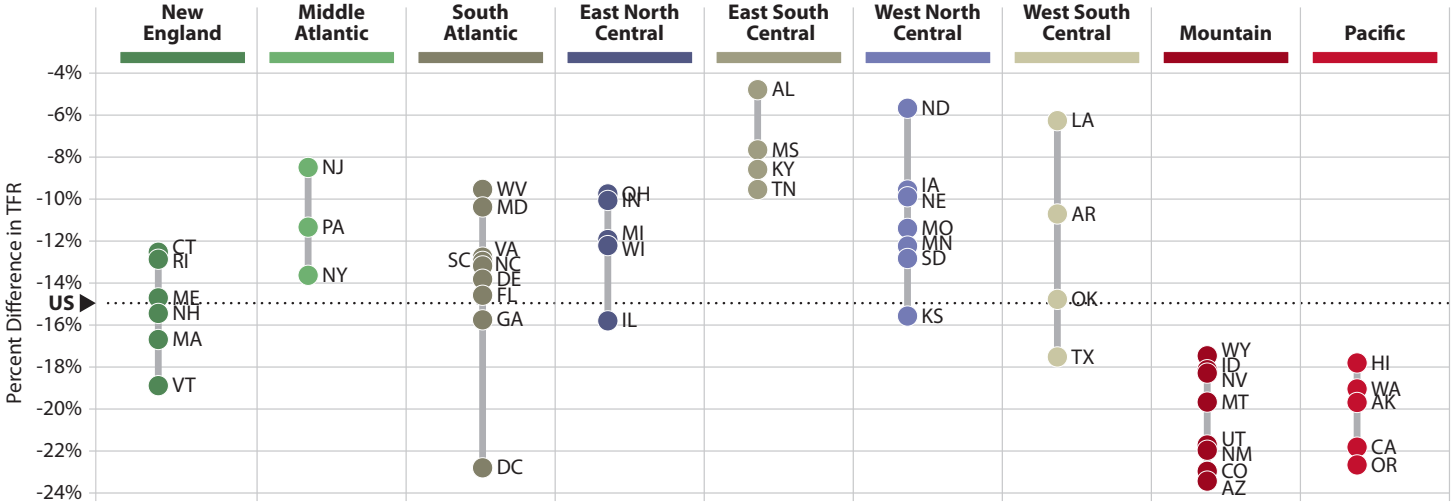
Source: National Center for Health Statistics

Figure 4: Utah Age Specific Fertility Rate Absolute Differences, 2020-2021



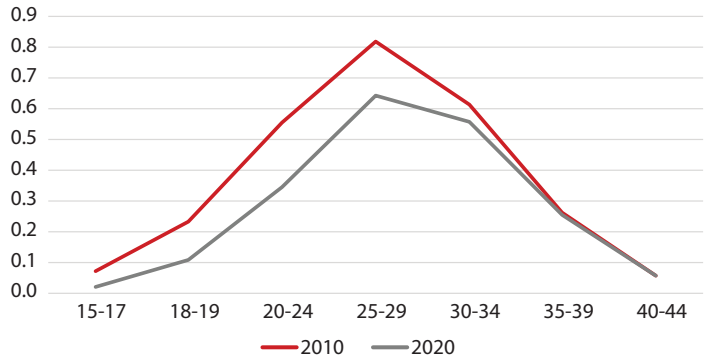
Source: National Center for Health Statistics

Figure 5: Percent Decline in Total Fertility Rate by State (grouped within divisions), 2010-2020



Source: National Center for Health Statistics, calculations by Kem C. Gardner Policy Institute.

Figure 6: Utah Age Specific Fertility Rates, 2010 and 2020



Source: National Center for Health Statistics

The Intermountain West and Pacific divisions (and the states within them) are experiencing the largest fertility rate declines in the country. While Utah's fertility decline is exceptional in the national context, it is also part of a larger trend occurring in the West.

Much of what is driving the declines in state and regional TFRs is the declines in fertility before age 30. From 2010-2020, every division and region of the country experienced fertility declines in the age groups 15-17, 18-19, 20-24, and 25-29, signaling a decline in teen pregnancies and declines in the age groups considered as peak childbearing years.

1. Osterman MJK, Hamilton BE, Martin JA, Driscoll AK, Valenzuela CP. Births: Final data for 2021. National Vital Statistics Reports; vol 72, no 1. Hyattsville, MD: National Center for Health Statistics. 2023. DOI: https://dx.doi. org/10.15620/cdc:122047
2. Harris, E. 2021. Fertility in Utah: Recent Changes. Kem C. Gardner Policy Institute. https://gardner.utah.edu/wp-content/uploads/Fertility-FS-June2021.pdf?x-71849&x71849
3. This change in Utah's TFR is so small that we would not consider this statistically significant. Therefore, we would consider this to indicate no change in Utah's TFR.
4. Harris, E. 2022. A Decade of Declining Fertility in Utah, the Intermountain West, and the Nation: 2010-2020. Kem C. Gardner Policy Institute. https://gardner.utah.edu/wp-content/uploads/Fertility-RB-Jul2022.pdf?x71849