

Births to Teens in New Mexico

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Birth rates for teenagers are declining both in New Mexico and the U. S.; although the New Mexico birth rate among females 15-19 remains higher than the national birth rate. According to the National Center for Health Statistics[i], New Mexico had the sixth highest birth rate for this age group among the 50 states. Ventura, et al. note, however, that the variability among the states is substantial and differences in overall rates by State reflect differences in teen population by race and Hispanic origin. New Mexico has a unique population and this uniqueness should be taken into account whenever comparisons to the nation or other states are made. Consequently this study will examine the major race/ethnicity categories in New Mexico with comparison to the United States. This report examines birth rates by major race and ethnic categories, by age, and by urban-rural status of the mother for the period 1991-1998.

Table 1 illustrates the importance of population characteristics in reviewing rates. Although the gap between the overall New Mexico and the overall U. S. teen birth rates in 1998 is substantial, a notable difference exists only among Non-Hispanic Whites. The rates for American Indian and Hispanic teens are virtually the same for New Mexico and the United States.

Table 1. 1998 Birth Rates* for Teens 15-19 by Race and Hispanic Origin: New Mexico and the United States

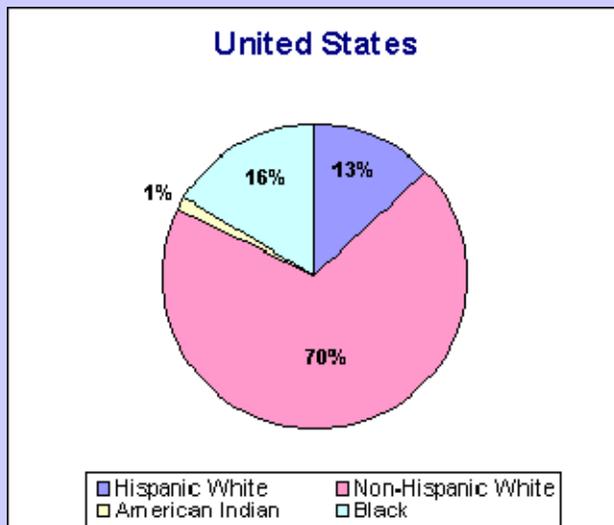
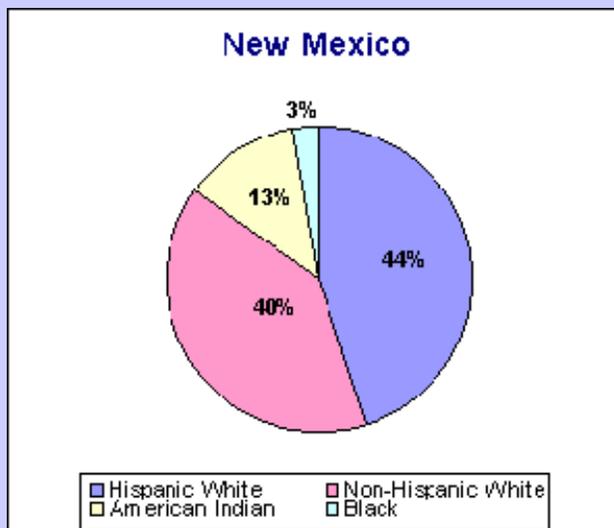
Race/Hispanic Origin	New Mexico	United States
All Races	67.7	51.1
American Indian	72.5	72.1
Hispanic	94.6	93.6
Non-Hispanic Whites	38.5	35.2

**Births per 1,000 women, age 15-19, by race and Hispanic origin of mother*

Among New Mexico females aged 15-19, Hispanics represent approximately 44 percent of the population, Non-Hispanic Whites constitute 39 percent and American Indians represent 12 percent. All other races, including Black, comprise less than 5 percent of this population and account for approximately 130 births per year in this age group. For the U. S. female population 15-19, Hispanics account for approximately 13.5 percent and Non-Hispanic Whites comprise 66.5 percent while American Indians represent only 1.2 percent of females 15-19[i][ii]. **Figure 1** compares New Mexico and United States teen populations.

Figure 1. Females, 15-19, by Major Race/Ethnic Categories:

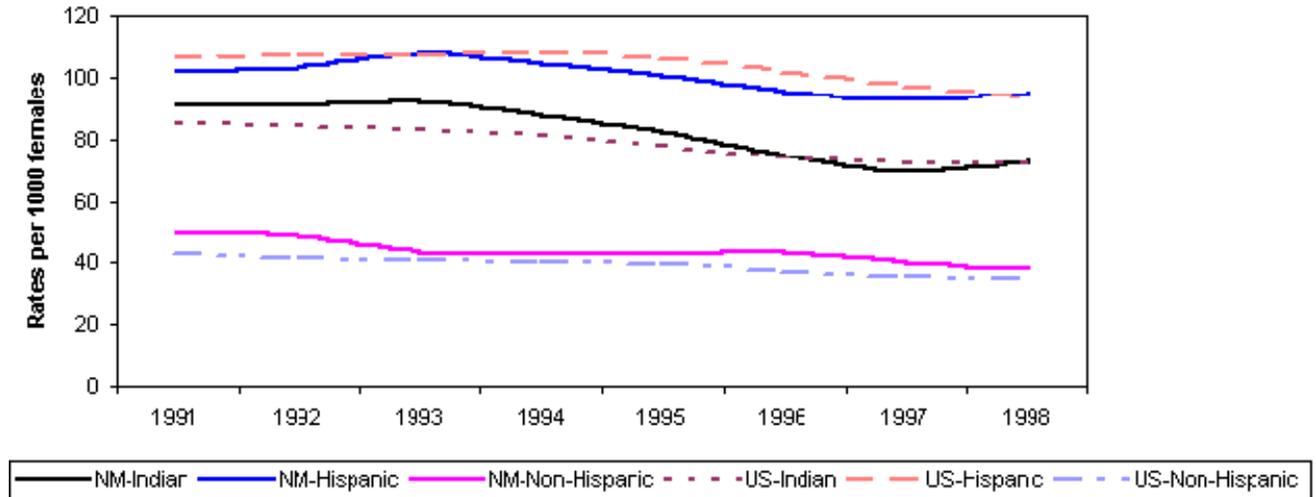
New Mexico and the United States, 1998



All race/Hispanic origin categories showed declines in teen birth rates during this time period (1991-1998). However, the groups showed peak birth rates at different points in time. American Indian birth rates reached their highest level in 1993 for both New Mexico and the United States. Hispanic birth rates in New Mexico also peaked in 1993 while the U.S. Hispanic birth rate among teens peaked in 1994. Non-Hispanic White birth rates in both New Mexico and the United States were highest at the beginning of the period (1991) and have steadily decreased throughout the time period. Hispanics continue to have the highest birth rates among the major race/Hispanic origin categories in New Mexico.

Nationally the highest teen birth rates occur among Hispanics. **Figure 2** illustrates the trends over time for race/Hispanic origin categories for both New Mexico and the United States. Notably there is more diversity between different race and ethnic categories than between New Mexico and the United States. Interestingly, the teen birth rate among the New Mexico American Indian population began with a higher rate at the beginning of the time period but ended with a rate similar to American Indians nationally.

Figure 2. Birth Rates Among Females, 15-19, by Race/Hispanic Origin: New Mexico and the United States 1991-1998



Although teens aged 15-19 are shown as a whole, in essence they comprise two different groups.

The younger teens aged 15-17 are probably still be in secondary school and financially dependent. The older teens may have completed their secondary education and have more resources available to them.

According to the National Center for Health Statistics, in 1998 New Mexico had the third highest birth rate among the younger teens. As with all teens, birth rates differ greatly by race/Hispanic origin with rates highest among 15-17 year old Hispanics and lowest among Non-Hispanics as indicated in [Table 2](#).

Table 2. Birth Rates* for Teens 15-17 by Race and Hispanic Origin:

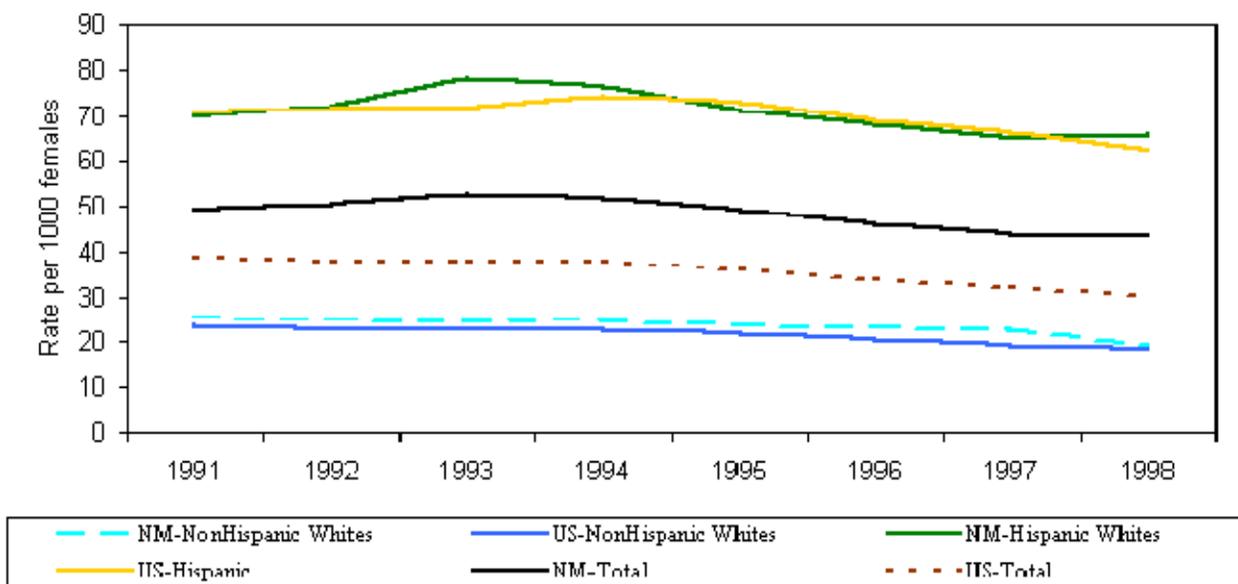
New Mexico and the United States 1991-1998

Race/Hispanic Origin	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998
All Races								
New Mexico	49.0	50.4	52.6	51.7	49.0	46.1	44.1	43.5
United States	38.7	37.8	37.8	37.6	36.0	33.8	32.1	30.4
American Indian								
New Mexico	51.7	58.0	54.6	52.0	54.0	46.3	42.2	43.4
United States	52.7	53.8	53.7	51.3	47.8	46.4	45.3	44.3
Hispanic								
New Mexico	69.9	72.1	78.0	76.4	71.2	68.1	64.9	65.7
United States	70.6	71.4	71.7	74.0	72.9	69.0	66.3	62.3
Non-H ispanic Whites								
New Mexico	25.4	24.9	24.4	24.9	23.6	23.2	22.8	19.5
United States	23.6	22.7	22.7	22.8	22.0	20.6	19.4	18.4

**Births per 1,000 women, age 15-17, by race and Hispanic origin of mother*

Approximately two-thirds of New Mexico's 1998 births to teens 15-17 were to Hispanic females. Among American Indian females aged 15-17, New Mexico and the United States had similar birth rates and trends during this time period. The Hispanic birth rate among New Mexico teens 15-17 has decreased 16 percent since its peak in 1993 but is still higher than the U.S. rate. The decline in birth rates for New Mexico non-Hispanics is even greater than the decline for New Mexico Hispanics but still remain higher than the U. S. rate. [Figure 3](#), which illustrates the trend by Hispanic origin, suggests the gap between New Mexico and U. S. birth rates for teens 15-17 will grow if the national rates continue to decrease and New Mexico rates, particularly for Hispanics, either decline less rapidly or increase.

Figure 3. Birth Rates Among Females, 15-17, Hispanic Origin and All Races: New Mexico and the United States, 1991-1998



Birth rates among 18-19 year-old females present a slightly different picture. Although the New Mexico birth rate is higher than the U. S. rate (Table 3), the gap (28.6 percent) between the two is narrower than among the younger teens (43.1 percent).

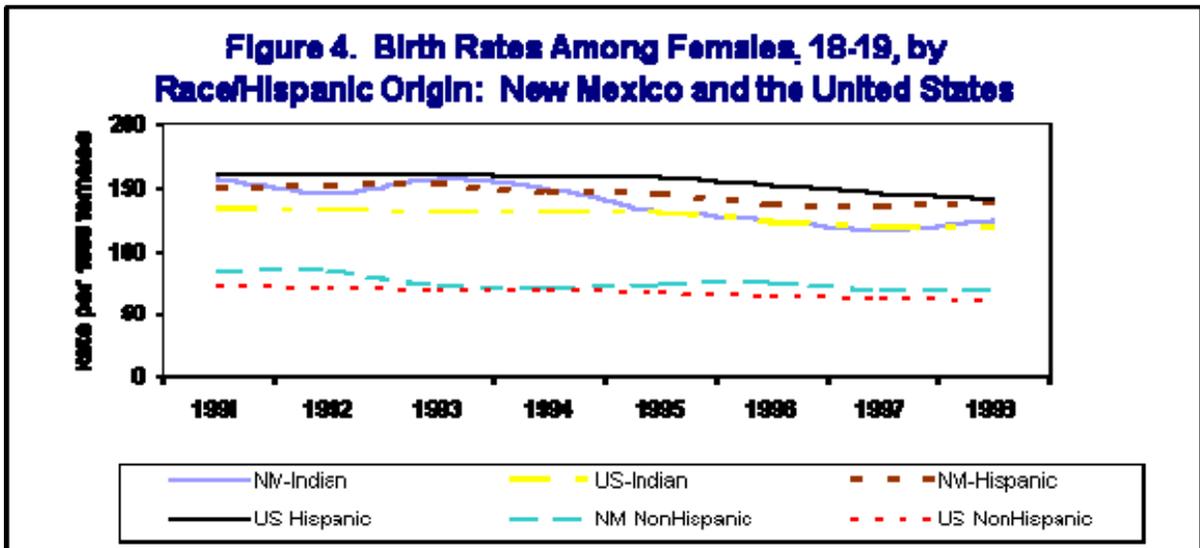
Table 3. Birth Rates* for Teens 18-19 by Race and Hispanic Origin:

New Mexico and the United States 1991-1998

Race/Hispanic Origin	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998
All Races								
New Mexico	121.2	119.4	118.3	112.5	111.1	107.6	103.3	105.5
United States	94.4	94.5	92.1	91.5	89.1	86.0	83.6	82.0
American Indian								
New Mexico	156.1	145.6	155.8	147.4	130.0	122.6	115.7	122.4
United States	134.3	132.6	130.7	130.3	130.7	122.3	117.6	118.0
Hispanic								
New Mexico	149.1	150.4	153.4	146.1	144.2	137.5	135.2	138.5
United States	158.5	159.7	159.1	158.0	157.9	151.1	144.3	140.2
Non-Hispanic Whites								
New Mexico	82.6	82.8	71.0	69.5	72.5	73.8	67.8	68.1
United States	70.5	69.8	67.7	67.4	66.1	63.7	61.9	60.6

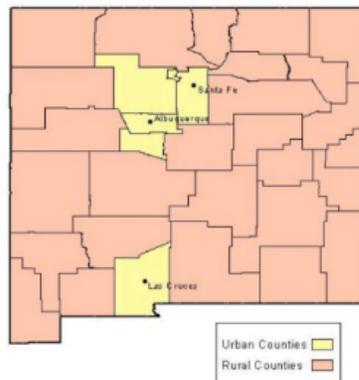
**Births per 1,000 women, age 18-19, by race and Hispanic origin of mother*

Across race/Hispanic categories, the biggest difference between New Mexico and the United States is among Non-Hispanic Whites (**Figure 4**). Again, as with the 15-17 age group, Hispanics have the highest birth rate followed by the birth rate among American Indians. Among the older teens, the Hispanic and American Indian birth rates are more similar than among the younger teens. The New Mexico birth rate among both Non-Hispanic Whites (17.6) and American Indians (21.6) has decreased more than the comparable national rates (Non-Hispanic -14.0, American Indian -11.8).



In addition to a unique racial/ethnic composition, New Mexico has a largely rural component. Traditionally birth rates have been higher in rural areas. The Census Bureau defines only six counties in New Mexico including 3 metropolitan standard areas (Albuquerque, Las Cruces, Santa Fe) as urban with the remaining counties classified as ruralⁱⁱⁱ[i]. [Figure 5](#) shows the rural composition of New Mexico.

Figure 5. Urban and Rural Areas in New Mexico, 1990



Source: ©The State Center for Health Statistics at
New Mexico Vital Records and Health Statistics GIS
Public Health Division, New Mexico Department of Health

Table 4 illustrates the trend from 1991-1998 in New Mexico among teens 15-19 by urban-rural status. While only 45 percent of New Mexico's females age 15-19 live in rural areas, approximately 55 percent of the births in this age group occur

in these areas. Table 4 shows that the number of teen births has increased slightly in this time period (+7 percent). The birth rate has decreased reflecting increasing number of teens in both rural and urban areas. Since 1991 the number of teens (15-19) has increased 20 percent in the rural areas and 27 percent in the urban areas

Table 4. New Mexico Resident Births and Rates Females 15-19 by Urban-Rural Status, 1991

	Number of Births							
	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998
Rural	2,612	2,624	2,704	2,694	2,716	2,667	2,569	2,692
Urban	1,905	2,045	2,166	2,145	2,124	2,099	2,127	2,169

	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998
	Rural	90.9	88.0	89.2	85.4	84.7	80.5	78.5
Urban	66.9	69.4	69.9	67.8	64.2	61.9	59.9	60.0

In summary, it is important to take the characteristics of the population into consideration when examining teen birth rates. New Mexico has a population which is very different from the U. S. population and contains a large proportion of Hispanic and American Indian teens (two of the three groups with the highest birth rates). The relative paucity of Blacks, who have the second-highest birth rates among teens in the U.S., in the state's population is also balanced by the relative scarcity of Asian-Pacific Islanders who have the lowest birth rates. New Mexico is also a largely rural state, which affects the birth rate particularly among the older teens. In the United States, the ten states with the highest birth rate among females 18-19 are states with large rural populationsiv[jii].

The birth rate among females 15-17 in New Mexico decreased only 11 percent during this time period compared to a 21 percent decrease in the U. S. rate leaving a large gap (43 percent) between New Mexico and the U. S. in birth rates. The New Mexico American Indian population showed the largest decrease over this time period but this decline occurred among the older teens rather than the younger teens. Among the younger teens the Hispanic rates are much higher than the American Indian (51 %) or Non-Hispanic White (236 %) categories. This is also true of the U. S., although the gap is smaller at the national level for American Indians (40 %). Although birth rates among teens in New Mexico and the U. S. have declined since 1991 the high rate among females 15-17 in New Mexico may still be problematic. Giving birth at an early age may hinder a young teen's ability to finish school and prepare for a place in the workforce.

1[i] Ventura SJ, Curtin SC, Mathews TJ. "Variations in teenage birth rates, 1991-98: National and State Trends. National Vital Statistics Reports; vol 48 no.6. Hyattsville, Maryland: National Center for Health Statistics, 2000.

1[ii] U.S. Census Bureau, Statistical Abstract of the United States: 1999. U.S. Department of Commerce, Economics and Statistics Administration.

v[iii] Bernalillo, Sandoval, Valencia (Albuquerque MSA), Dona Ana (Las Cruces MSA), Los Alamos, Santa Fe (Santa Fe MSA).

1[iv] Mississippi, Tennessee, Texas, Arkansas, Arizona, New Mexico, Nevada, Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana as listed in Ventura et al (2000)

