

# Vermont Legislative Joint Fiscal Office

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*Issue Brief*

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## **Vermont Population Data –**

### **Vermont's Births, Birth Rates and Age of Mother at Birth, 1980-2014**

As part of the effort by the Joint Fiscal Office (JFO) and others to produce new consensus estimates of the population going forward, we are learning about historical trends in births, deaths, and population by age in the State. This Issue Brief represents the first in a series of Issue Briefs that will delve into some of those historical trends.

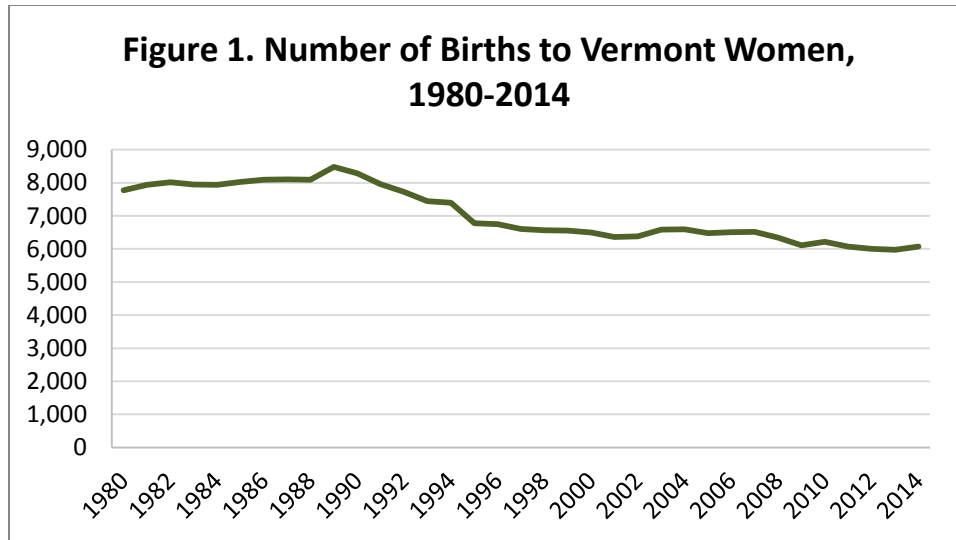
This paper shows that women are having fewer children and having them at older ages.

- Births in Vermont have dropped from about 8,000 in 1980 to about 6,000 in 2010.
- The number of women in the prime ages for childbearing has declined about 22 percent from its peak in 1988.
- The number of births per 1,000 Vermont women of child-bearing age has dropped from about 52 in the 1980s and now stands at about 38.
- In 1980, women 22 years of age to 26 years of age had the largest share of births at 35 percent. By 2010, however, women 27 years of age to 31 years of age had the largest share at about 30 percent.

Most people in Vermont recognize that Vermont has one of the oldest populations in the United States and that the number of children living in Vermont has shrunk dramatically over the last few decades. One way to understand the aging population and shrinking number of children is to look at the number of births in Vermont over time and the rate at which women are having babies.

#### **Historical Births and Birth Rates**

Births to Vermont women have declined significantly since the 1980s (see Figure 1). From about 8,000 births per year in the 1980s, the number of babies born to Vermont women dropped to about 6,500 in the late 1990s and declined further to about 6,000 by 2006. After some fluctuations in the late 2000s, the number of births has remained around 6,000 in the first half of the 2010s.

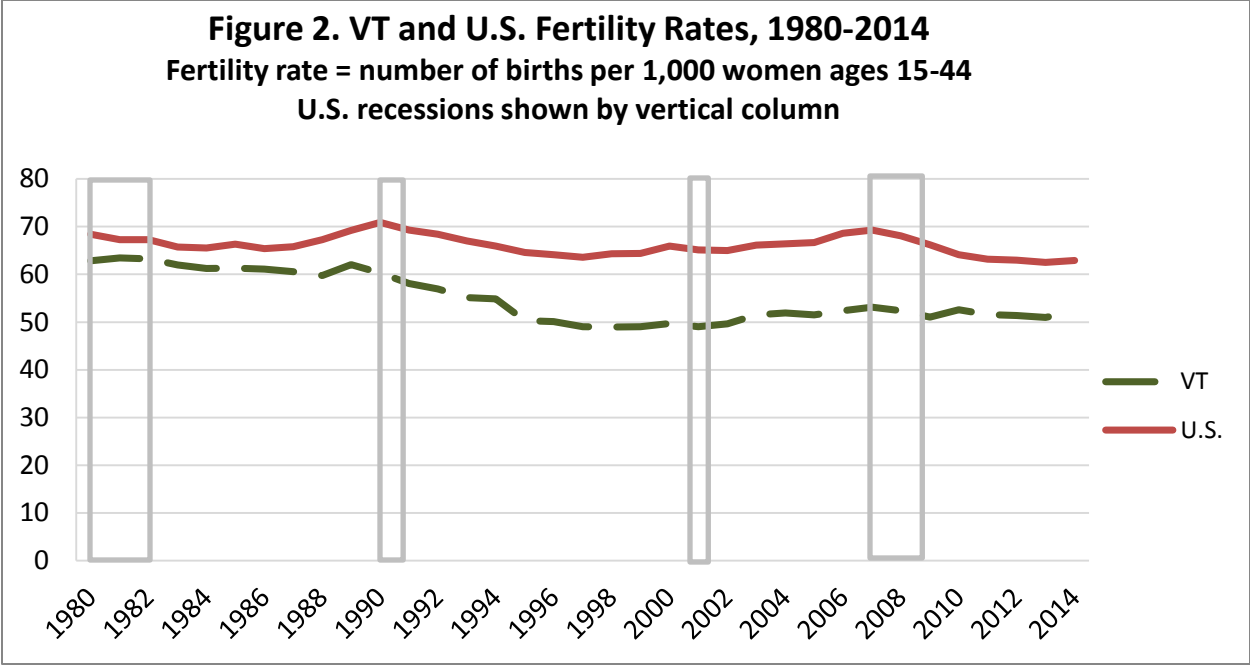


Source: Vermont Department of Health

Declines in births follow in part from declines in the number of women of childbearing age:

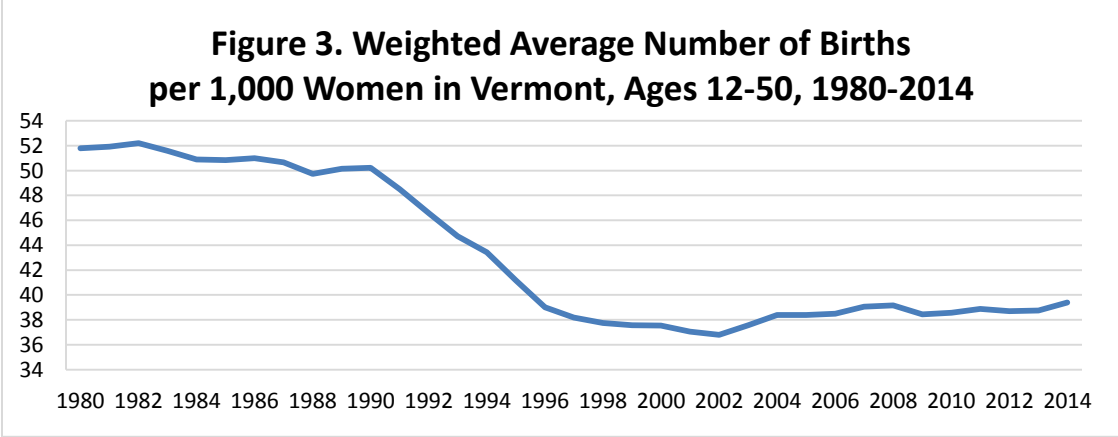
- The number of females 12 years of age to 50 years of age peaked in 1997 at 175,000; since then, it has declined and in 2014 was 13 percent lower.
- The number of women in the prime ages for childbearing, 22 years of age to 36 years of age, has declined about 22 percent from its peak in 1988.

In addition to the drop in the number of Vermont women of child-bearing age over time, the average number of babies born to each woman has declined as well. The Vermont general fertility rate, defined as the number of births in a year per 1,000 women ages 15 to 44, dropped from its peak of 63.5 in 1981 to its lowest level of 49.0 in 1999. By way of comparison, the U.S. general fertility rate over this same period peaked at 70.9 in 1990 and fell to a low of 62.5 in 2013. On average, the Vermont general fertility rate has been about 17 percent lower than the U.S. general fertility rate since 1980.



Sources: Vermont Department of Health, U.S. Census Bureau, National Bureau of Economic Research

The number of births per 1,000 Vermont women of child-bearing age (12 years of age to 50 years of age), weighted by the number of women in each single year of age, was relatively flat in the 1980s, declined sharply in the 1990s, and has recovered slightly since the low point in 2002 (see Figure 3). Between 1990 and 2002, the weighted average birth rate declined 27 percent; in 2014, it was still 22 percent below the 1990 level.

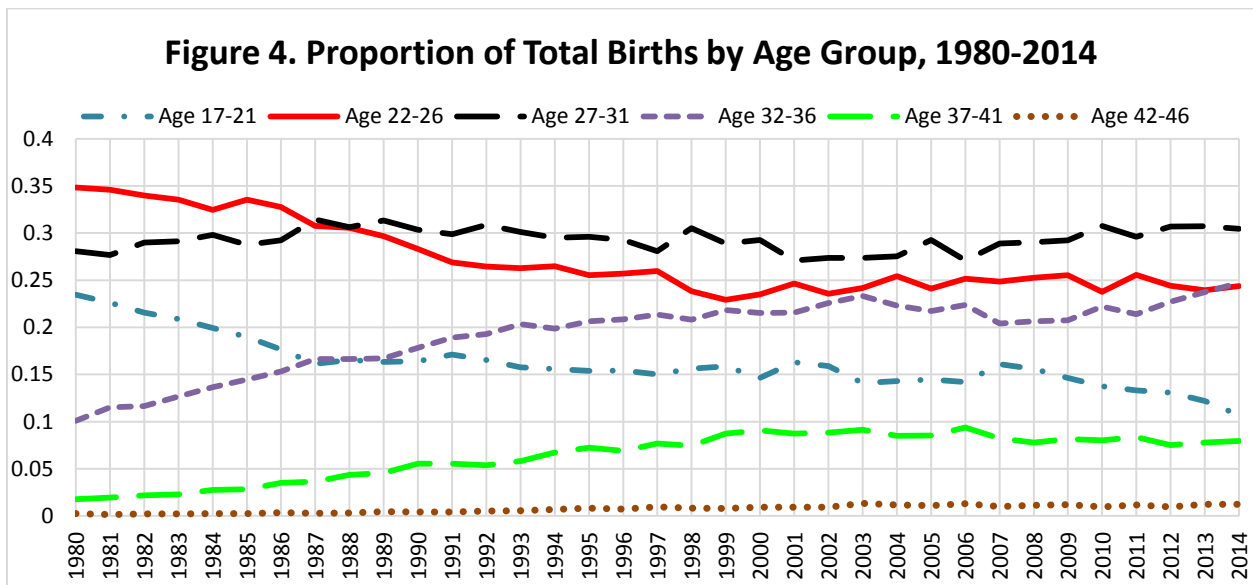


Source: Vermont Department of Health, U.S. Census Bureau

## Age of Mother at Birth

One of the reasons that the number of births per 1,000 women of child-bearing age has fallen is that women are waiting until later in life to have babies. Here we focus on births to women 17 years of age to 46 years of age because those women had between 98 percent and 99 percent of all births in any year. In 1980, women 22 years of age to 26 years of age had the largest share of births at 35 percent (see Figure 4). By 2014, however, somewhat older women 27 years of age to 31 years of age had the largest share at about 30 percent.

The trend toward births at older ages is especially evident among women in their late teens and early 20s and among women in their 30s. The proportion of births to Vermont women 17 years of age to 21 years of age has fallen from about 23 percent in 1980 to about 10 percent in 2014. Similarly, the share of births to women 22 years of age to 26 years of age fell from 35 percent in 1980 to 24 percent in 2014. At the same time, the proportion of births to women 32 years of age to 36 years of age rose from 10 percent in 1980 to 25 percent in 2014, and the share to women 37 years of age to 41 years of age rose from 2 percent in 1980 to 8 percent in 2014.



Source: Vermont Department of Health, JFO Analysis