

More signs that US births may have stopped falling

December 6 2013, by Mike Stobbe

There's more evidence that U.S. births may be leveling off after years of decline.

The number of babies born last year only slipped a little, and preliminary government figures released Friday indicate that trend continued through the first six months of this year.

U.S. births rose after the late 1990s and hit an all-time high of more than 4.3 million in 2007. But then they started dropping each year, and in 2011 the number was as low as it had been in the 1990s.

The decline was widely attributed to the nation's economy. Experts believed that many [women](#) or couples who were out of work or had other money problems felt they couldn't afford to start or add to their family.

Last year, the number of babies born—a little shy of 4 million—was only a few hundred less than in 2011, which some saw as a signal that the decline may be ending.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's latest figures show the number of births from July 2012 through last June were essentially the same as the previous 12 months, suggesting the trend is continuing.

Earlier this week, another CDC report showed a decline not only in women giving [birth](#) but in getting pregnant. In 2009, the pregnancy rate

dropped to its lowest level in 12 years. Of the nearly 6.4 million estimated pregnancies, about 4.1 million resulted in births, more than 1.1 million ended in abortions and about 1 million were miscarriages. Abortions accounted for 18 percent of pregnancies, down from 24 percent in 2009, said that report's lead author, CDC statistician Sally Curtin.

The highest pregnancy rates have shifted from women in their early 20s to those in their late 20s. That parallels a shift in the average age that women first get married.

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