

PERCENT OF LIVE BIRTHS TO UNMARRIED MOTHERS

1. Definition:

PERCENT OF LIVE BIRTHS TO UNMARRIED MOTHERS is the number of resident live births to unmarried mothers in a specified geographic area (country, state, county, etc.), divided by the number of resident live births for the same geographic area for a specified time period, usually a calendar year. This figure is multiplied by 100 to get a percentage.

2. Calculation:

$$\frac{\text{Number of Resident Live Births to Unmarried Mothers}}{\text{Number of Resident Live Births}} \times 100$$

3. Example:

44,500= live births to unmarried mothers in 2008 among state residents

127,000= resident births in 2008 to state residents

$(44,500/127,000) \times 100 = 35.0$ live births to unmarried mothers per 100 live births or 35.0% of all live births to state residents in 2008 were to unmarried mothers.

4. Technical Notes:

- The number of births, the birth rate, and the percentage of births to unmarried women are all important indicators of childbearing patterns and changes in family formation. Unmarried mothers tend to have more socio-economic issues, such as lower incomes and educational levels, that can adversely affect birth outcomes and impact the public health of a community or state.
- More than 1.6 million babies were born to unmarried women in 2006, the highest number ever recorded in the United States. The percentage of births to unmarried women has risen from 18.4% in 1980 to 38.5% in 2006.
- In less densely populated areas, annual numbers of births to unmarried mothers may be small which would result in a percentage of births to unmarried mothers considered to be too unstable or unreliable for analysis. Adding additional years (three or five-year average annual rates) and/or expanding the area to be studied should result in a larger number of births to unmarried mothers and more reliable rates for analysis. Please see [North Carolina Statistical Primer, Problems with Rates Based on Small Numbers](#); [Pennsylvania: Technical Assistance – Small Area Analysis](#); [New York State: Rates Based on Small Numbers](#) or [Washington State: Guidelines for Working with Small Numbers](#).
- Additional information on births to unmarried mothers can be found at: <http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/databriefs/db18.pdf> or <http://www.childtrendsdatabank.org/indicators/75UnmarriedBirths.cfm>