



Birth Expectations of Women Ages 20–49: United States, 2022–2023

Gladys M. Martinez, Ph.D.

Key findings

Data from the National Survey of Family Growth

- During 2022–2023, nearly 60% of women ages 20–29 who had not had any live births or who had one live birth expected to have a child in the future compared with about 30% of those with two or more live births.
- About two in five women ages 20–29 with no prior live births did not expect to have any children in the future.
- As age increased, the percentage of women with one or more previous live births who expected to have another child in 2–5 years declined.

Introduction

The National Survey of Family Growth (NSFG) has measured women's birth expectations since 1973, because this indicator is a key determinant of future family size and can be used to project U.S. birth rates. Birth expectations vary by age, number of prior live births, and other demographic characteristics (1–5). This report uses data from the 2022–2023 NSFG to present the most recent estimates of birth expectations by age and number of previous live births among U.S. women ages 20–49.

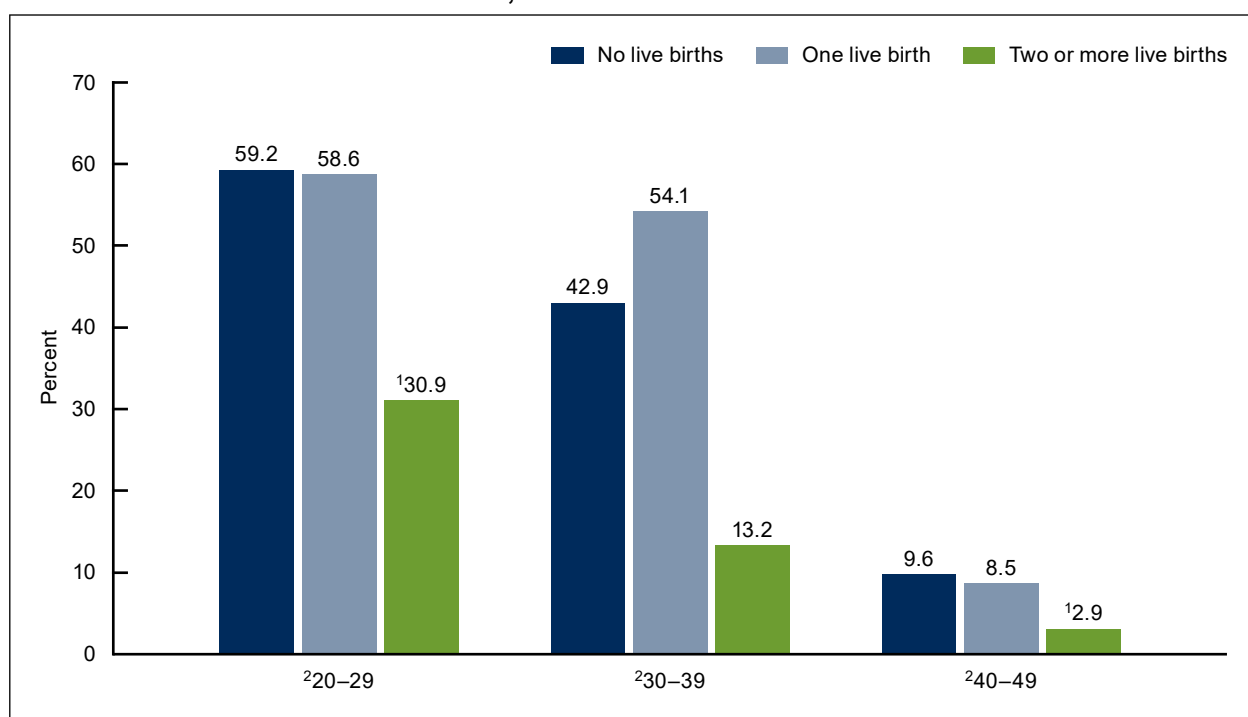
Age and number of live births

- In 2022–2023, more than one-half of women ages 20–29 who had not had any live births (59.2%) or had one live birth (58.6%) expected to have a child in the future compared with about one-third of those with two or more live births (30.9%) ([Figure 1](#), [Table 1](#)).



- Among women ages 30–39, a higher percentage of those who had one live birth (54.1%) expected to have a child in the future compared with those who had not had any live births (42.9%) and those with two or more live births (13.2%).
- About 10% of women ages 40–49 who had not had any live births (9.6%) or had one live birth (8.5%) expected to have a child in the future compared with 2.9% of those with two or more live births.
- Women’s expectations of having a child in the future decreased with age, regardless of prior childbirth experience.

Figure 1. Percentage of women ages 20–49 who expect to have a child in the future, by current age and number of live births: United States, 2022–2023



¹Significantly different from those who have not had a birth and those who have had one live birth ($p < 0.05$).

²All age categories are significantly different from each other ($p < 0.05$).

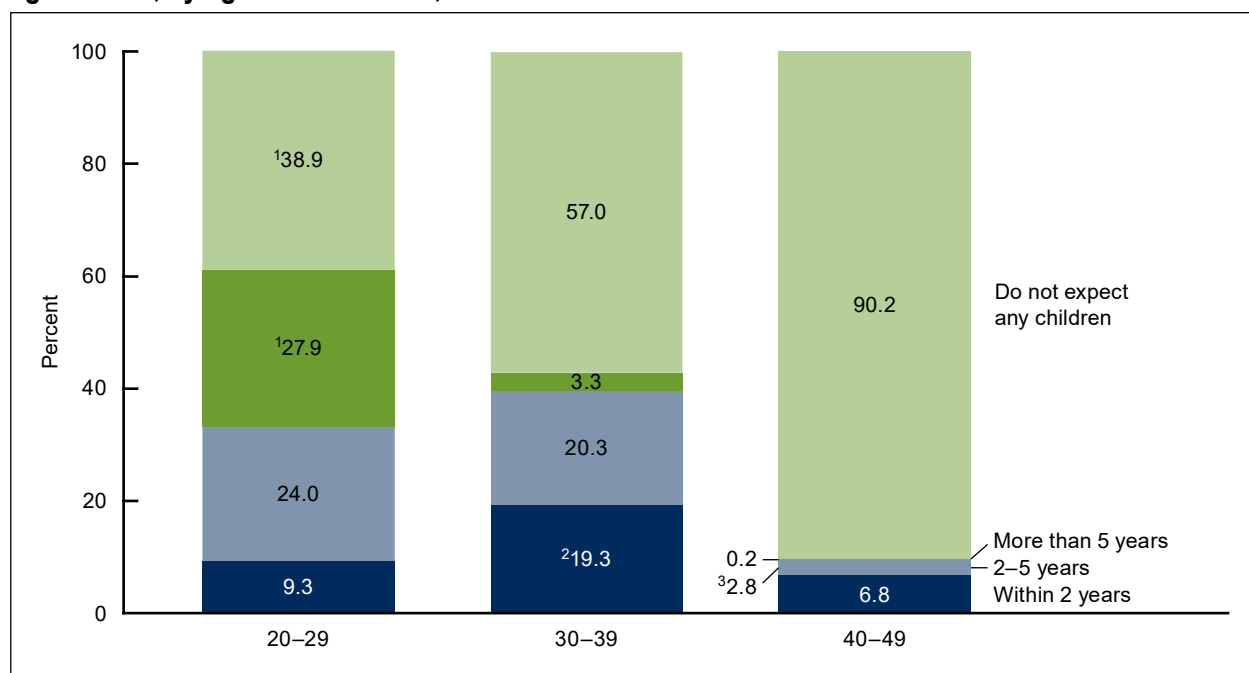
SOURCE: National Center for Health Statistics, National Survey of Family Growth 2022–2023.

Expected timing for nulliparous women

- In 2022–2023, among nulliparous women (those who have never had a live birth) ages 20–29, 38.9% did not expect to have a child, while 9.3% expected to have their first child within 2 years, 24.0% within 2–5 years, and 27.9% in more than 5 years (Figure 2, Table 2).
- Among nulliparous women ages 30–39, 57.0% did not expect to have a child, while 19.3% expected to have their first child within 2 years, 20.3% within 2–5 years, and 3.3% in more than 5 years.

- Among nulliparous women ages 40–49, 90.2% did not expect to have a child, while 6.8% expected to have their first child within 2 years, 2.8% within 2–5 years, and 0.2% in more than 5 years.

Figure 2. Percent distribution of expected timing of first child's birth among nulliparous women ages 20–49, by age: United States, 2022–2023



¹Significantly different for all age categories ($p < 0.05$).

²Significantly different from those ages 20–29 and 40–49 ($p < 0.05$).

³Significantly different from those ages 20–29 and 30–39 ($p < 0.05$).

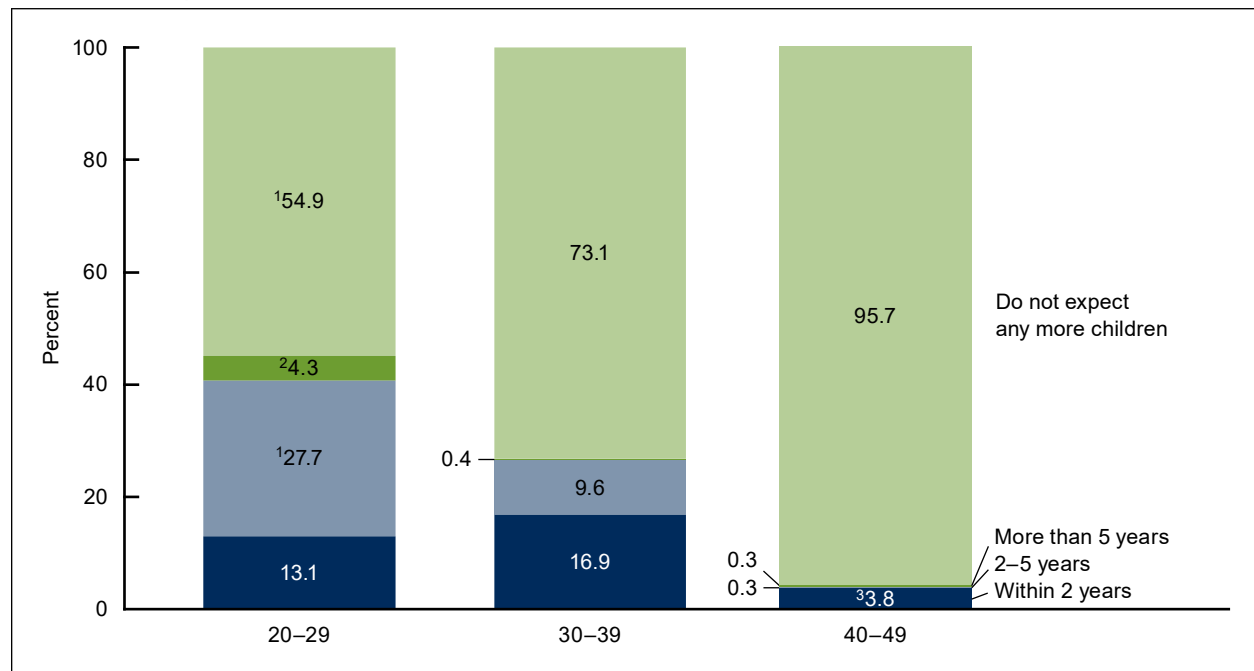
NOTES: Nulliparous refers to women who have never had a live birth. Totals may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

SOURCE: National Center for Health Statistics, National Survey of Family Growth, 2022–2023.

Expected timing for multiparous women

- In 2022–2023, among multiparous women (those who have had one or more live births) ages 20–29, 54.9% did not expect to have more children, while 13.1% expected to have another child within 2 years, 27.7% within 2–5 years, and 4.3% in more than 5 years (Figure 3, Table 3).
- Among multiparous women ages 30–39, 73.1% did not expect to have more children, while 16.9% expected to have another child within 2 years, 9.6% within 2–5 years, and 0.4% in more than 5 years.
- Among multiparous women ages 40–49, 95.7% did not expect to have more children, while 3.8% expected to have another child within 2 years, 0.3% within 2–5 years, and 0.3% in more than 5 years.

Figure 3. Percent distribution of expected timing of next child's birth among multiparous women ages 20–49, by age: United States, 2022–2023



¹Significantly different for all age categories ($p < 0.05$).

²Significantly different from those ages 30–39 and 40–49 ($p < 0.05$).

³Significantly different from those ages 20–29 and 30–39 ($p < 0.05$).

NOTES: Multiparous refers to women who have had at least one live birth. Totals may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

SOURCE: National Center for Health Statistics, National Survey of Family Growth, 2022–2023

Summary

In 2022–2023, women’s expectations for having children in the future varied by age and number of prior live births. The expected timing of a first or subsequent birth also varied by age. Although the percentage of women who did not expect to have any children increased with age regardless of the number of previous births, patterns in the timing of expected future births differed between nulliparous and multiparous women.

A higher proportion of nulliparous women ages 30–39 expecting their first birth within 2 years compared with those ages 20–29 is consistent with other indicators of delayed childbearing, such as increases in mean maternal age at first birth (6). Although most nulliparous women ages 40–49 did not expect to have a child, about 10% expected to have a child in the future.

Among multiparous women, a higher percentage of those ages 20–29 expected to have their next child within 2–5 years compared with those ages 30–39. In contrast, a similar percentage of nulliparous women ages 20–29 and 30–39 expected to have their first child within 2–5 years. This is also consistent with delayed childbearing and increased maternal age at first birth.

Definitions

Age: The respondent's age at the time of the survey (recode variable: AGER).

Birth expectations: Expectations respondents have regarding future childbearing are captured in the recode variable INTENT. For currently pregnant women, INTENT refers to birth expectations after the current pregnancy. For nulliparous women, INTENT reflects their expectation for having a first birth in the future. For multiparous women, INTENT reflects their expectation for another birth. These expectations for future births, as reported at the time of the survey, are distinct from respondents' reports of the intendedness of each pregnancy at time of conception.

Expectation of timing of future births: Respondents who intend to have a birth in the future were asked when they expect their first or next child to be born. JINTNEXT is the variable for currently married or cohabiting women, and INTNEXT is the variable for all other women. For respondents who already have children, the questions are phrased as "another child (in the future)." For respondents who have not yet had any live births, the question is phrased as "a child (in the future)."

Data source and methods

The 2022–2023 NSFG included information from 5,586 females ages 15–49, of whom 4,856 women ages 20–49 are included in this report. Details about the survey content, administration, response rates, planning, and funding can be found in documentation on the NSFG website (7,8). All estimates in this report are representative of the U.S. household population of women ages 20–49 in 2022. Statistics for this report were produced using SAS-callable SUDAAN software version 11.0.3 to account for NSFG's complex sample design. Differences between percentages were evaluated using two-tailed *t* tests at the 5% level. No adjustments were made for multiple comparisons. Survey clusters minus strata were used as the degrees of freedom for significance testing of pairwise comparisons. The data presented in this report are bivariate associations that may be explained by other factors not controlled for in the report. Due to changes in survey design to a multimode approach and lower response rates resulting from several factors (7), comparisons with previous NSFG data releases should be made with caution. All estimates presented meet National Center for Health Statistics guidelines for presentation of proportions (9).

About the author

Gladys M. Martinez is with the National Center for Health Statistics, Division of Health Interview Statistics.

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Figure tables

Data table for Figure 1. Percentage of women ages 20–49 who expect to have a child in the future, by current age and number of live births: United States, 2022–2023

Characteristic	Number (in thousands)	Percent	Standard error
Total ¹	64,223	30.8	1.04
No live births	26,684	47.0	1.75
One live birth	11,204	39.4	2.06
Two or more live births	26,335	10.7	0.85
Age and parity ²			
20–29:			
No live births	15,330	59.2	2.35
One live birth	2,787	58.6	5.06
Two or more live births	3,462	³ 30.9	4.52
30–39:			
No live births	7,134	¹ 42.9	3.00
One live birth	4,529	54.1	3.23
Two or more live births	10,537	13.2	1.42
40–49:			
No live births	4,220	9.6	2.23
One live birth	3,888	8.5	1.79
Two or more live births	12,335	³ 2.9	0.73

¹All categories are significantly different from each other ($p < 0.05$).
²Significant linear trend by age ($p < 0.05$)
³Significantly different from those who have not had a live birth and those who have had one live birth ($p < 0.05$).
 SOURCE: National Center for Health Statistics, National Survey of Family Growth, 2022–2023.

Data table for Figure 2. Percent distribution of expected timing of first child's birth among nulliparous women ages 20–49, by age: United States, 2022–2023

Characteristic	Percent	Standard error
Total:	100.0	...
Within 2 years	¹ 11.6	0.86
2–5 years	19.6	1.16
More than 5 years	16.9	1.29
Do not expect any children	51.9	1.83
Age and timing of first child's birth		
20–29:		
Total	100.0	...
Within 2 years	9.3	1.13
2–5 years	24.0	1.72
More than 5 years	² 27.9	1.88
Do not expect any children	² 38.9	2.27
30–39:		
Total	100.0	...
Within 2 years	³ 19.3	2.05
2–5 years	20.3	2.05
More than 5 years	3.3	0.97
Do not expect any children	57.0	3.09
40–49:		
Total	100.0	...
Within 2 years	6.8	1.72
2–5 years	⁴ 2.8	1.08
More than 5 years	0.2	0.16
Do not expect any children	90.2	2.21
<p>... Category not applicable. ¹All categories significantly different from each other except 2–5 years and more than 5 years ($p < 0.05$). ²Significantly different for all age categories ($p < 0.05$). ³Significantly different from those ages 20–29 and 40–49 ($p < 0.05$). ⁴Significantly different from those ages 20–29 and 30–39 ($p < 0.05$). NOTES: Nulliparous refers to women who have never had a live birth. Totals may not sum to 100% due to rounding. SOURCE: National Center for Health Statistics, National Survey of Family Growth, 2022–2023.</p>		

Data table for Figure 3. Percent distribution of expected timing of next child's birth among multiparous women ages 20–49, by age: United States, 2022–2023

Characteristic	Percent	Standard error
Total ¹ :	100.0	...
Within 2 years	10.6	0.52
2–5 years	8.6	0.63
More than 5 years	1.0	0.28
Do not expect any more children	80.0	0.77
Age and timing of first child's birth		
20–29:		
Total	100.0	...
Within 2 years	13.1	1.72
2–5 years	² 27.7	2.64
More than 5 years	³ 4.3	1.48
Do not expect any more children	² 54.9	3.61
30–39:		
Total	100.0	...
Within 2 years	16.9	1.21
2–5 years	² 9.6	1.08
More than 5 years	0.4	0.13
Do not expect any more children	² 73.1	1.40
40–49:		
Total	100.0	...
Within 2 years	⁴ 3.8	0.64
2–5 years	² 0.3	0.13
More than 5 years	0.3	0.26
Do not expect any more children	² 95.7	0.67
<p>... Category not applicable. ¹Significantly different for all categories ($p < 0.05$). ²Significantly different for all age categories ($p < 0.05$). ³Significantly different from those ages 30–39 and 40–49 ($p < 0.05$). ⁴Significantly different from those ages 20–29 and 30–39 ($p < 0.05$). NOTES: Multiparous refers to women who have had at least one live birth. Totals may not sum to 100% due to rounding. SOURCE: National Center for Health Statistics, National Survey of Family Growth, 2022–2023.</p>		

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