



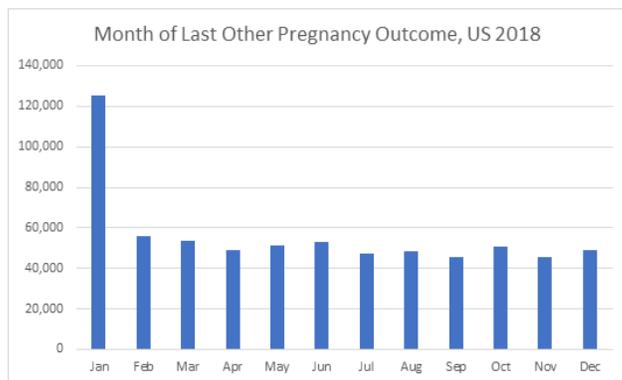
## Cooperative Agreement Corner: Mortality Data Quality Workgroup Report is Available!

As part of the Vital Statistics Improvement Cooperative Agreement, the Mortality Data Quality Workgroup (MDQW) was created with members from vital statistics jurisdictions, NAPHSIS, and NCHS to identify high priority mortality data quality issues and develop measures and strategies to improve mortality data quality. Each measure includes the justification for its selection, a description of the measure, and the strengths and limitations of each measure. The group recently completed a report to include measures of mortality data quality identified by the MDQW.

If you would like a copy of the complete report or if you are interested in being a part of the MDQW as it moves forward in determining strategies to improve mortality data quality, please contact Kristin Simpson at [ksimpson@naphsis.org](mailto:ksimpson@naphsis.org) or Lee Anne Flagg at [LFlagg@cdc.gov](mailto:LFlagg@cdc.gov).

## Collecting Date Values

For multiple items on our data files, we collect full date values, including year, month and day components. Each component can individually be reported as unknown when only part of the date is known. Some of our calculations allow us to take advantage of these partially-known dates as a better alternative to a fully unknown date. However, we have long observed the use of default values within dates, as some data systems may not allow the use of '99' as a valid Month or Day. Instead, these unknown parts may default to '01' or the entire date may be reported as completely unknown. The graph below shows the 2018 US distribution for Month of Last Other Pregnancy Outcome on the birth file for the 12 calendar month values, which we would expect to be more uniformly distributed across the year:



As you can see, January is reported much more frequently than any other month. This variable is used to help us calculate intervals between pregnancies, and the over-reporting of January leads to incorrect computations on many records each year.

The excess reporting varies by jurisdiction, but is a problem nationally, and other date values across all datasets have shown some level of

bias. While we closely monitor and try to minimize unknown values, reporting an automatic default value is more difficult to identify, and leads to other quality concerns. We encourage jurisdictions to confirm the ability to collect and report partially unknown dates in your systems.

## **Meet your Vital Statistics Specialist Team!**

Every jurisdiction has a Vital Statistics Specialist (VSS) assigned to work with them on all VSCP and NDI contractual matters. This team is responsible for ensuring data files are received both timely and completely, ensuring accuracy of records by following up on gross errors including any errors related to infant death linkages. The team is also responsible for ensuring accurate invoices are received and paid promptly. The team is part of the Data Acquisition, Classification and Evaluation Branch, located in North Carolina.



Pictured from left to right are Chrissy Jarman, Enudio Mercado-Gonzalez, Pam Stephenson, Denise Little, Susan McBroom, Connie Gentry, and Senora Davis

Don't know who the assigned Vital Statistics Specialist is for your jurisdiction? Jurisdictional assignments are listed below:

- Chrissy Jarman: Team Lead
- Enudio Mercado-Gonzalez: AZ, DE, FL, MD, MT, NC, PR, RI, WA
- Pam Stephenson: AL, CO, HI, ID, ME, ND, SD, VI, VA
- Denise Little: AR, MA, MI, MS, NE, NY, SC, TX, UT, WI
- Susan McBroom: CA, GA, IL, LA, NV, NJ, YC, MP, WV
- Connie Gentry: KS, KY, MN, MO, NH, NM, OH, OK, PA, WY
- Senora Davis: AK, AS, CT, DC, GU, IN, IA, OR, TN, VT

## VSCP Contract Market Research

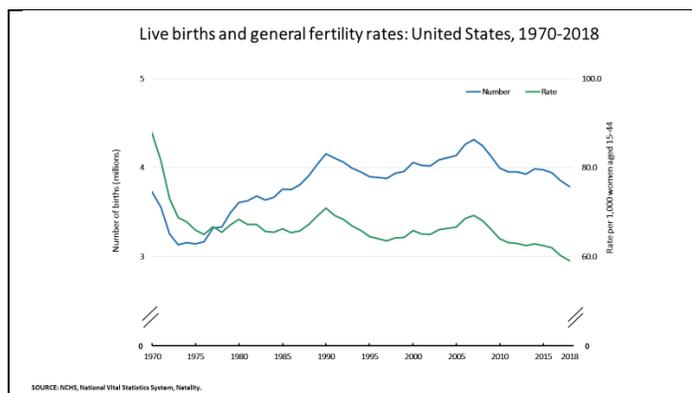
The current VSCP contract will expire at the end of 2021 and NCHS must have the scope of work finalized by the summer of 2020. To prepare for the next contract, a small group of NCHS staff and jurisdictional representatives will soon be meeting to talk about potential improvements to the contract. The jurisdiction members of this workgroup include Frank Caniglia (PA), Chris Harrison (GA), Ken Jones (FL) and Mariah Pokorny (SD); NCHS members include Steve Schwartz, Paul Sutton, Isabelle Horon and Karen Knight. Communications will be forthcoming from this group about their discussions.

## Notable Publications/Data Briefs

### **Births: Final Data for 2018**

On November 27, 2019 final birth data for 2018 was released and can be found at this [link](#). The fairly extensive media coverage of the detailed report on final data included stories from CNN, NBC News, The New York Times, Washington Post, US News and World Report and Wisconsin Public Radio. (The final 2018 final file and associated Data Brief “Births in the US, 2018” were released and may be found at this [link](#)).

The figure below shows that in 2018, 3,791,712 births were registered in the United States, down 2% (or 63,788) from 2017. This is the fourth year that the number of births has declined, following an increase in 2014. Before that year, the number of births declined steadily from 2007 through 2013. The general fertility rate (GFR) for the United States in 2018 was 59.1 births per 1,000 females aged 15–44, down 2% from 2017 (60.3) and a record low rate for the nation.



For questions regarding Births: Final Data for 2018, you may contact Joyce Martin at [jcm9@cdc.gov](mailto:jcm9@cdc.gov) or Brady Hamilton at [boh5@cdc.gov](mailto:boh5@cdc.gov).

## Innovations

### **The Minnesota Office of Vital Records publishes a monthly newsletter titled *Vital Records News*.**



Molly Crawford, Registrar, Minnesota State Office of Vital Records

This unique newsletter covers topics in birth and death registration, local issuance, the Minnesota Registration & Certification (MR&C) system, and other vital records programs. Some of the interesting topics included in *Vital Records News* is a Fetal Death Report Pilot Study conducted by their state’s Birth Defects Monitoring & Analysis Unit. The Unit got

permission to access fetal death reports in Minnesota Registration & Certification (MR&C) and to abstract the matching maternal medical records at two health systems. They reviewed 43 reports of fetal death occurring between August 2018 and October 2018 and compared MR&C fetal death report information to what they abstracted from the medical records. The overall findings of the study were that the information in most fetal death reports matched the mother’s medical record at the delivery hospital. However, reviewers could not

evaluate the accuracy for some *data elements* because the information was only on the mother’s worksheet and not in the mother’s medical record. Facilities are not required to retain the worksheets. Other interesting topics included in this month’s *Vital Records News* is Minnesota’s Office of Vital Records’ collaboration with its Medical Examiner Partners and its connection with the Minnesota Association of County Officers.

For questions regarding Minnesota’s newsletter you can e-mail [health.vitalrecords@state.mn.us](mailto:health.vitalrecords@state.mn.us). Put *Vital Records News* in the subject line. One of the newsletter staff will contact you.

We want to hear from you and feature your segments! Please send us your initiatives from the broader community, questions, or lessons learned. **Have a topic to share with the monthly newsletter audience?** Send it to George Tolson at [gct1@cdc.gov](mailto:gct1@cdc.gov) today!

## Vitals Staff Spotlights

### **Excellence in Science Award**



**Margaret Warner**, of the Mortality Statistics Branch, Division of Vital Statistics, was presented with the Excellence in Science Award from the American Public Health Association’s Injury Control and Emergency Health Section. This award recognizes individuals for

outstanding dedication and leadership in the science of injury/violence prevention and control and emergency health services, with contributions and achievements that have a significant and long-term impact on the field.

Congratulations, Margy!!

## State Updates

**Robert LoCicero** has departed his position as State Registrar and VSCP Project Director in New York State.

**Lenny Kluz** accepted the position of Acting State Registrar and VSCP Project Director in New York State.

**Stephen Wurtz** accepted the position of State Registrar Emeritus and Director Emeritus in New Hampshire.

Jurisdictions may add as many names as they would like to our NCHS Newsletter mailing list! Just send a note to George Tolson at [gct1@cdc.gov](mailto:gct1@cdc.gov) today.

This newsletter is a publication of the NVSS, intended to enhance the community of vital records and vital statistics practice, to provide useful information for vital statistics and vital records professionals, and to inform the broader community of interested stakeholders.