



Maternal and Paternal Age: Births to Individuals Aged 40 and Older, 2016-2021

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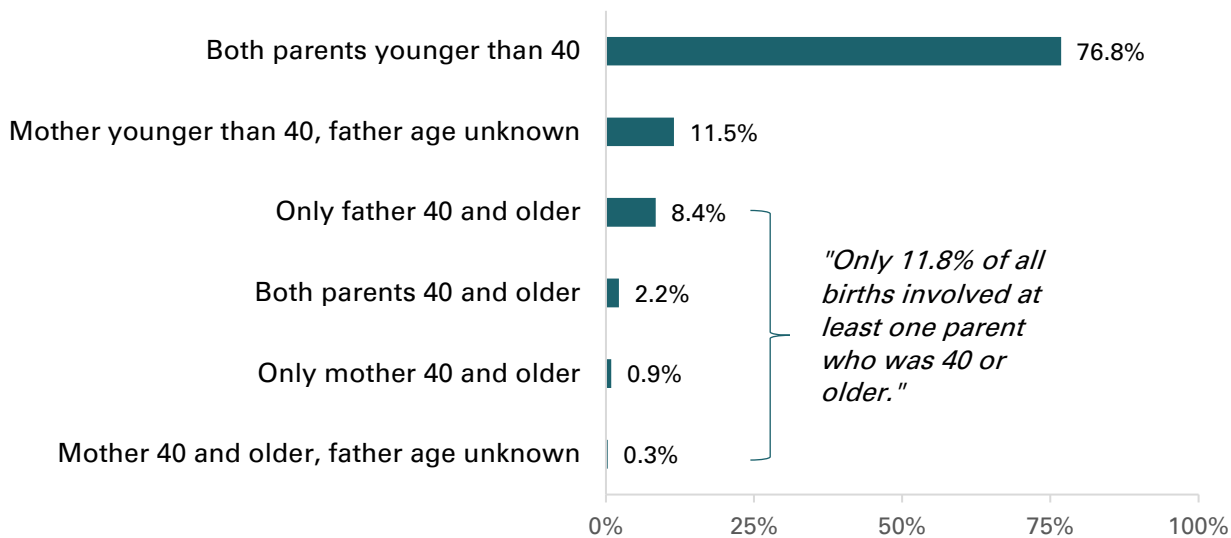
Although there has been an overall decline in birth rates in the U.S. in recent years, the birth rate of women 40 and older has consistently increased ([Hamilton, Martin, and Osterman, 2023](#)). This reflects the shift to a later age at first birth among women ([Guzzo and Payne, 2018](#)) as well as shifts in men’s childbearing behaviors to later ages ([Khandwala, Zhang, Lu, and Eisenberg, 2017](#)). In this profile, we use vital statistics birth data from [CDC Wonder](#) for the years 2016-2021 to consider the contributions of births to men and women 40 and older to the total number of births. We also examine the age distribution of the other parent for women and men 40 and older. Paternal age, which is reported by mothers, is unknown for 11.8% of all births, and we include these births in all calculations.

Contribution of Births to Individuals 40 and Older to Total Births, 2016-2021

Despite rising birth rates to women aged over 40, Figure 1 shows the births to men and women aged 40 and older account for only a small share of overall births.

- The majority of births (76.8%) occurring from 2016-2021 were to parents who were both under age 40.
 - An additional 11.5% of all births were to women under 40 for which the age of the father was unknown.
- Only 11.8% of all births involved at least one parent who was aged 40 or older.
 - Most of these births were births in which the father was aged 40 or older but the mother was not (8.4% of all births).
 - Only 2.2% of all births from 2016-2021 involved two parents aged 40 or older.

Figure 1. Share of Births by Parents' Age



Source: Author’s analyses of CDC Wonder Birth data, 2016-2021

Age Distribution of the Other Parent for Births to Individuals Over 40, by Gender

Figure 2a. Among Births to Women Aged 40 and Older

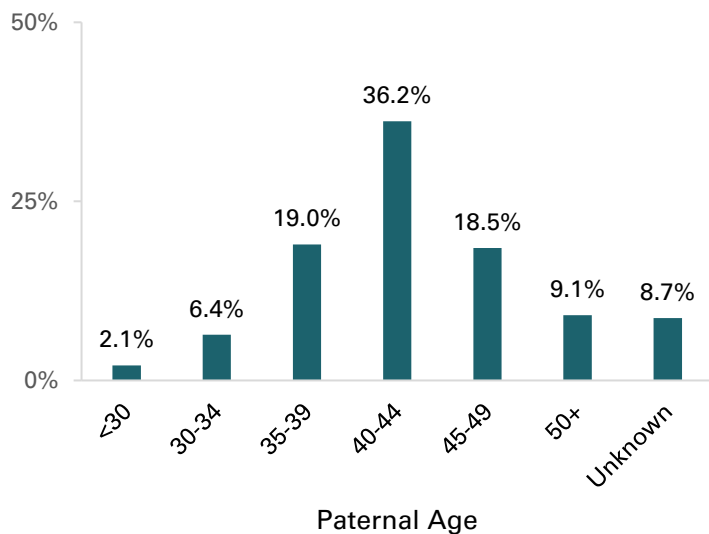
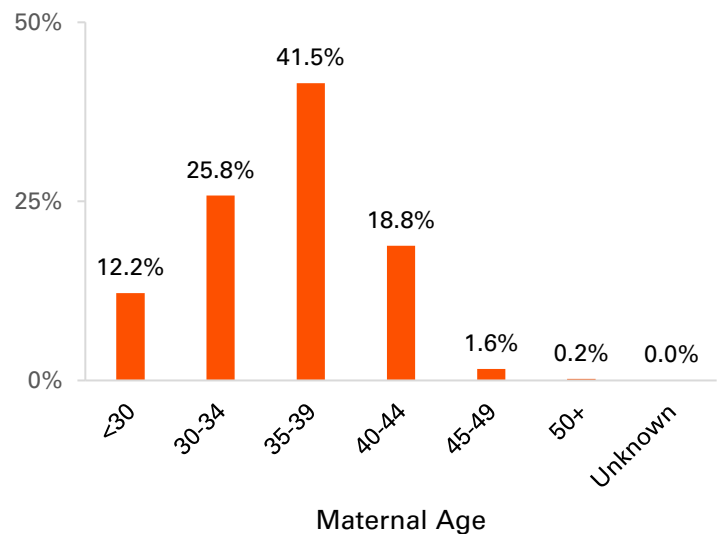


Figure 2b. Among Births to Men Aged 40 and Older



Source: Author's analyses of CDC Wonder Birth data, 2016-2021

There are stark gender differences in the age of the other parent among births to men and women 40 and older.

- Among births to women aged 40 and older (Figure 2a), 64% had a fathers' age of 40 and older.
 - The most common paternal age for births to women aged 40 and older was age 40-44 (36.2%).
 - Similar shares of births to women aged 40 and older had a paternal age of 50 or higher (9.1%) or an unknown paternal age (8.7%)
 - Very few of these births involved a father under age 30 (2.1%).
- Unlike births to women aged 40 and older, only one fifth (20.6%) of births to fathers aged 40 and older (Figure 2b) had a mother who was also 40 and older.
 - More than four-in-ten (41.5%) births to fathers aged 40 and older involved a birth to women 35-39.
 - A quarter (25.8%) of births to fathers aged 40 and older were to a mother 30-34, with 12.2% including a mother under 30.

Data Source:

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Health Statistics. National Vital Statistics System, Natality on CDC WONDER Online Database. Data are from the Natality Records 2016-2021, as compiled from data provided by the 57 vital statistics jurisdictions through the Vital Statistics Cooperative Program. Accessed at <http://wonder.cdc.gov/natality-expanded-current.html> on Jun 21, 2023, 4:23:30 PM

References:

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