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FP-13-10 Women Who Gave Birth Within the Past 12 months, 2011

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Historically, marriage has been the primary context for childbearing. However, the share of births that are to unmarried women has been increasing. Nonmarital births have doubled in the past three decades to 41% of all U.S. births (Martin et al., 2011). This profile uses the 2011 American Community Survey 1-year population records to examine the demographic characteristics of currently unmarried and married women in the U.S., aged 15 to 44, who reported having given birth within the past 12 months.

Marital Status and Marital Histories
- Among women who gave birth in the last year, nearly 2 in 5 (38%) are currently unmarried (figure not shown).
- Approximately 17% of currently unmarried women who had a child in the last year have been previously married. Among currently married women who gave birth in the last year, 10% are in a remarriage (figures not shown).
- Among currently married women who experienced a birth in the past 12 months, 8.3% also married in the past 12 months (figure not shown).

Educational Attainment
Married women who had a child in the last year have typically achieved higher levels of education than their unmarried counterparts.
- Only 7% of unmarried women who gave birth in the last year have at least a Bachelor’s degree compared with 43% of their married counterparts.
- A quarter (26%) of unmarried women who had a child in the last year have less than a high school diploma versus 10% of married women who had a child in the last year.

Race, Ethnicity, and Hispanic Nativity
There are racial, ethnic, and nativity differences in the marital statuses of women who gave birth in the last year.
- Among unmarried women who gave birth in the last year, 41% are White. Yet White women make up 64% of married women with births in the last year.
- Asians comprise 2% of unmarried women and 9% of married women with births in the last year.
- Unmarried women who gave birth in the last year are disproportionately Black. Black women make up over a quarter (27%) of unmarried women, but only 6% of married women with births in the past year.
- Among unmarried women who gave birth in the last year, 18% are native-born Hispanic and 11% are foreign-born Hispanic. Among married women with births in the last year, 9% are native-born Hispanic, and 12% are foreign-born Hispanic.
Age Distribution
Married women who gave birth in the last year are much older than their unmarried counterparts, on average.
- One quarter (25%) of unmarried women with births in the past year are between the ages of 30 and 44. In contrast, over half (57%) of married women with births in the past year are between the ages of 30 and 44.

Employment¹ and Poverty Status
- Unmarried women who gave birth in the last year are less likely to have been employed full time (25%) than married women who gave birth in the last year (38%) and more likely to have been unemployed (16% vs. 5%) in the last year.
- Similar percentages of unmarried and married women who gave birth in the last year were not in the labor force (37% and 39%, respectively) in the past year.
- Unmarried mother families are much more likely to be living in poverty than married mother families (51% vs. 14%, respectively).

References

¹Employment was only asked of individuals 16 years and older. However, as only .31% of the sample includes 15-year-old women who gave birth in the past year, this does not preclude meaningful analysis.