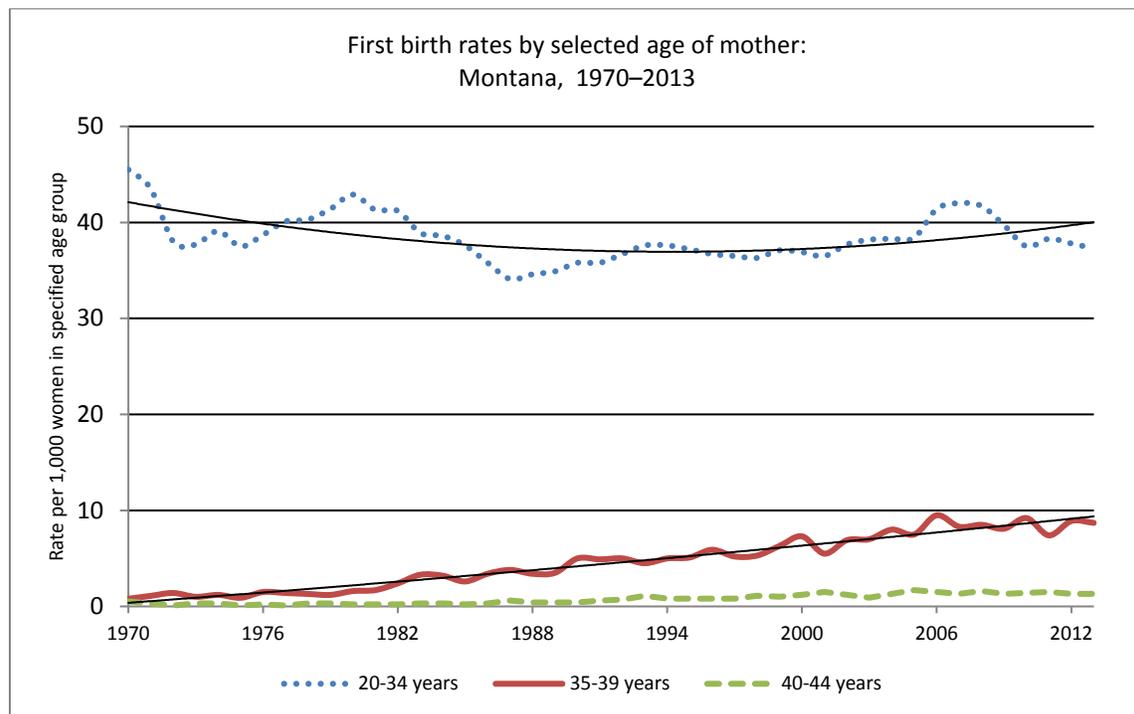


November, 2014

First Births to Older Women Increasing in Montana

Anna G Walker, MS/MBA, Vital Statistic Research Analyst
Carol Ballew, PhD, Senior Public Health Epidemiologist

More women in general are getting pregnant for the first time later in life. It is no longer unusual for women to wait until they are in their late 30s to have their first child. A few women even wait until their early 40s. The graph below includes information for all first births to Montana women aged 35-44 years from 1970 to 2013.



- The rate of first births to women aged 35–39 years increased from 1970 to 2013. In the early 1970s, only one woman per thousand had her first child between the ages of 35-39 years. Between 2006 and 2013, the rate increased to almost 9 per thousand.
- From 1970 to 1986, the rate of first births to women aged 40–44 years was steady with an average of 0.25, but started increasing in 1987. The pregnancy rate for women 40-44 years has increased to 1.3 pregnancies per 1,000 women.

Obstetricians warn women against waiting too long to have their first child. Older first mothers are more likely to have chronic health conditions that complicate pregnancy such as hypertension or diabetes. They are more likely to experience placenta praevia, pre-eclampsia, premature birth, miscarriage, ectopic pregnancy, and complications of labor and delivery. The risk of having a baby with genetic or chromosomal defects increases with maternal age. Getting early and regular prenatal care and considering optional prenatal tests for women over 35 will increase the chance of having a healthy baby.

Source: MT Vital Statistics System