

Pandemic Births: Dip and Rebound in the United States

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Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic began in March 2020. This poster examines patterns in births throughout the COVID-19 pandemic at the national and state levels by a variety of demographic characteristics.

Data

There are birth certificate data available on the Center for Disease Control (CDC)'s Wonder website through 2020. Here, we look at births by month, mother's age, Hispanic origin, and education from 2009-2020. Births by mother's nativity and race are only available from 2016-2020.

Provisional monthly birth totals by state through September 2021 are available from the CDC's National Vital Statistics System.

Birth certificate data can reflect short-term fluctuations in births much more accurately than traditional population measures can reflect short-term fluctuations in the population. This poster therefore looks at births, not at birth rates.

National Overview: Dip and Rebound

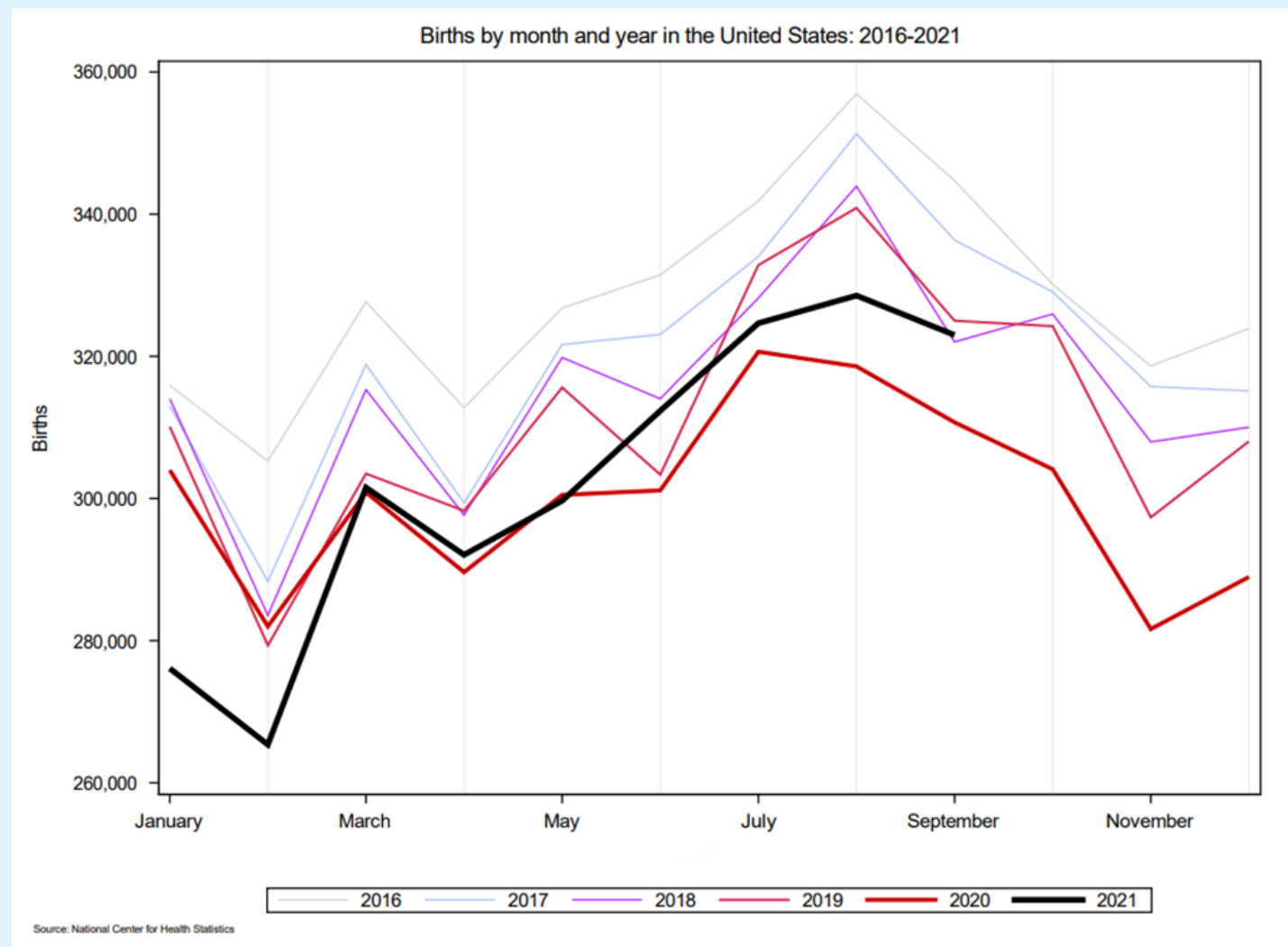
Dip:

Births in the U.S. have been broadly declining. In general, there are fewer births each year than the last. In 2020, however, births declined more than usual.

The earliest we would expect to see a change in births would be December 2020—9 months after the pandemic began. While births in December of 2020 and January 2021 were very low, the birth decline actually began in the summer of 2020.

Rebound:

By March of 2021, however, births had stopped their steep decline. By the summer of 2021, births returned to normal rates of decline. For example, by June of 2021, there were more births than in either June of 2019 or 2020.



Births per month and percent change between years: January 2018-September 2021

Months	Births per month				Percent change		
	2018	2019	2020	2021	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21
January	314,808	310,872	304,683	277,000	-1.25%	-1.99%	-9.09%
February*	284,250	279,963	282,601	266,000	-1.51%	0.94%	-5.87%
February births per day	10,152	9,999	9,745	9,500	-1.51%	-2.54%	-2.51%
March	316,044	304,237	301,457	302,000	-3.74%	-0.91%	0.18%
April	298,394	298,947	290,252	293,000	0.19%	-2.91%	0.95%
May	320,622	316,386	301,313	300,000	-1.32%	-4.76%	-0.44%
June	314,816	304,092	301,931	313,000	-3.41%	-0.71%	3.67%
July	329,009	333,646	321,253	325,000	1.41%	-3.71%	1.17%
August	344,750	341,685	319,313	329,000	-0.89%	-6.55%	3.03%
September	322,772	325,781	311,224	324,000	0.93%	-4.47%	4.11%
October	326,778	325,043	304,460	--	-0.53%	-6.33%	--
November	308,703	298,086	281,576	--	-3.44%	-5.54%	--
December	310,766	308,802	285,138	--	-0.63%	-7.66%	--
Annual	3,791,712	3,747,540	3,605,201	--	-1.16%	-3.80%	--

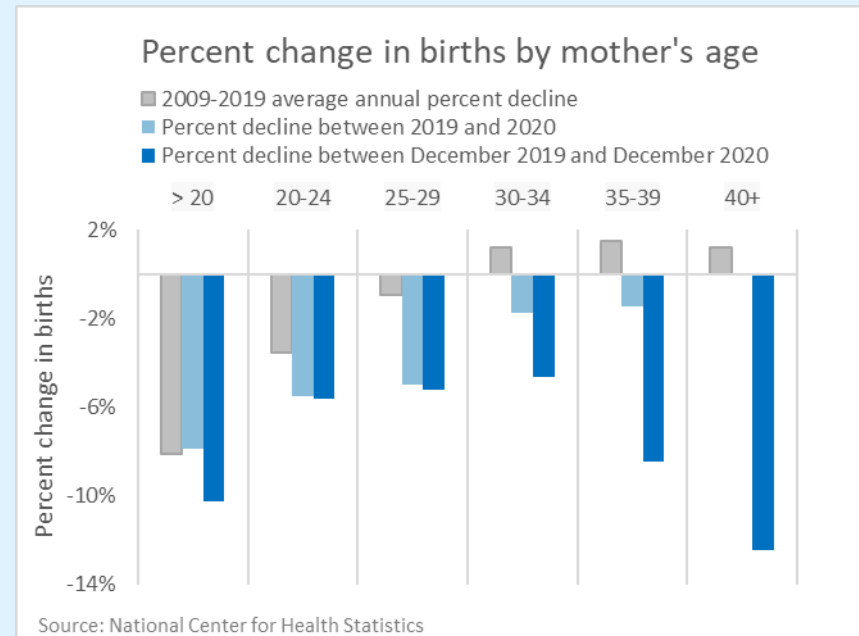
Note: Because February 2020 was a leap year, it was longer than February of 2018, 2019, or 2021. The births per day is therefore a more accurate reflection of the pace of births in February.
Source: National Center for Health Statistics

National Level: An Uneven Dip

Although there were differences by many covariates, variations by mother's age, race and nativity groups were more pronounced than by education or ethnicity.

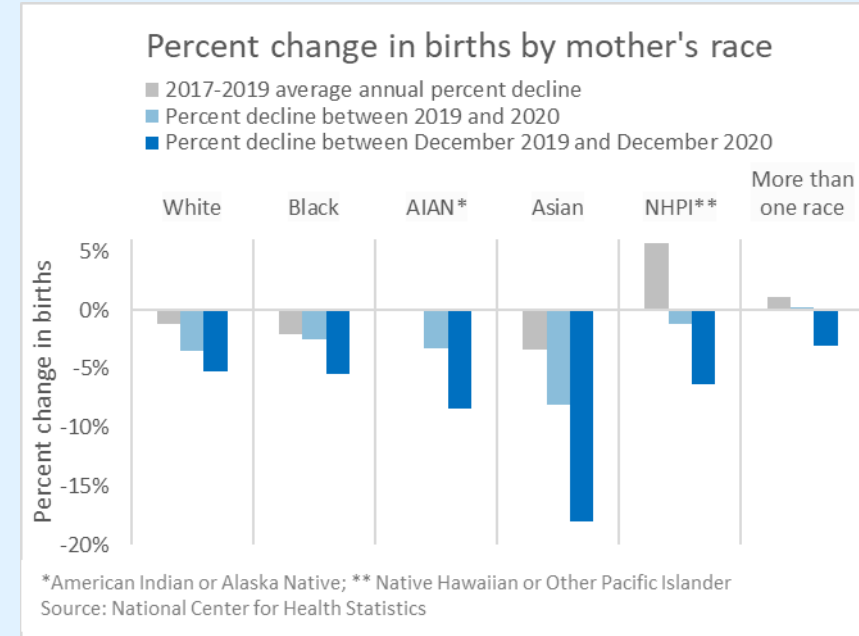
An uneven dip by age:

In general, the decline in births in the U.S. is occurring among younger women while births to women at older ages are increasing. In the decade of 2009-2019, births to women in their 20s decreased while births to women aged 30+ increased. During 2020, however, births declined to women of all age groups. Births to women in their 30s reversed their increase and births to women aged 40+ had dramatic decreases.



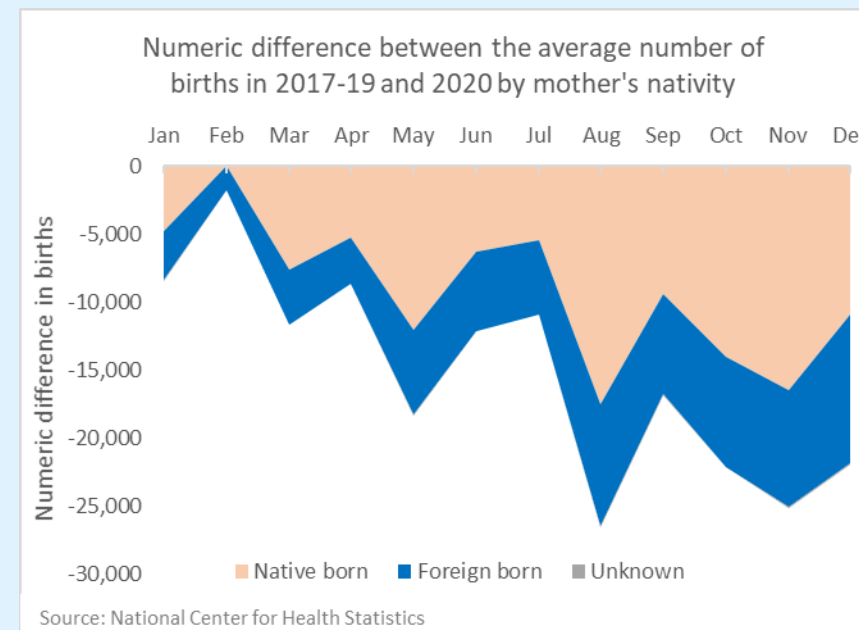
An uneven dip by race:

The decline in births in 2020 was disproportionately driven by births to Asian women. The number of births to Asian women in December of 2020 was 18% lower than the number of births to Asian women in December of 2019.



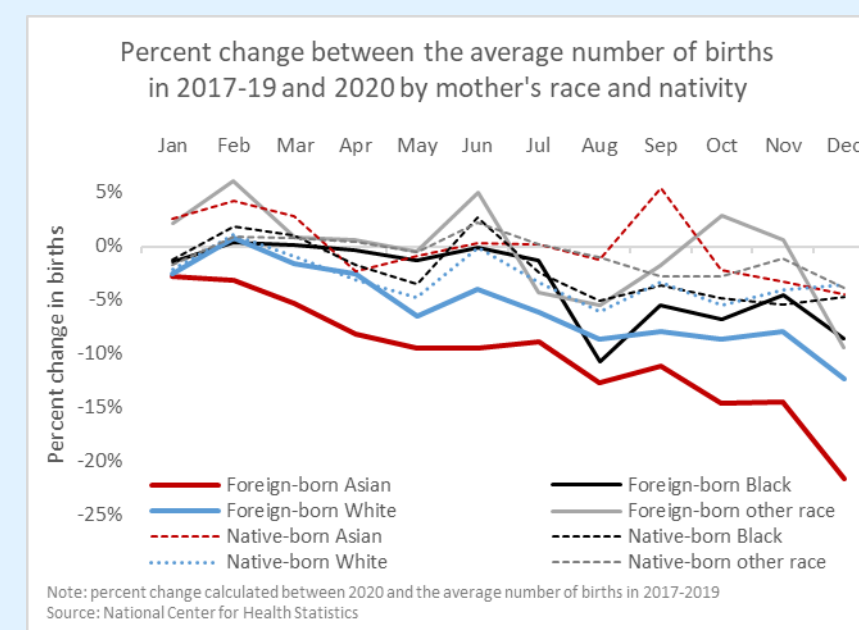
An uneven dip by nativity

The decline in births in 2020 was disproportionately driven by births to foreign-born women. Although foreign-born persons make up only about 14% of the U.S. population, foreign-born women comprised about half of the national decline in births in December of 2020. This may partially explain the decrease in births in the summer of 2020. The decline in births was likely driven by a decline in foreign-born women as well as a decline in birth rates.



An uneven dip by nativity and race

Among foreign born women, foreign-born Asian women had the largest proportional decline. Births to foreign-born Asian women in December of 2020 were 22% lower than the average annual number of births between 2017 and 2019. By contrast, births to native-born Asian women were only 4% lower in December of 2020.

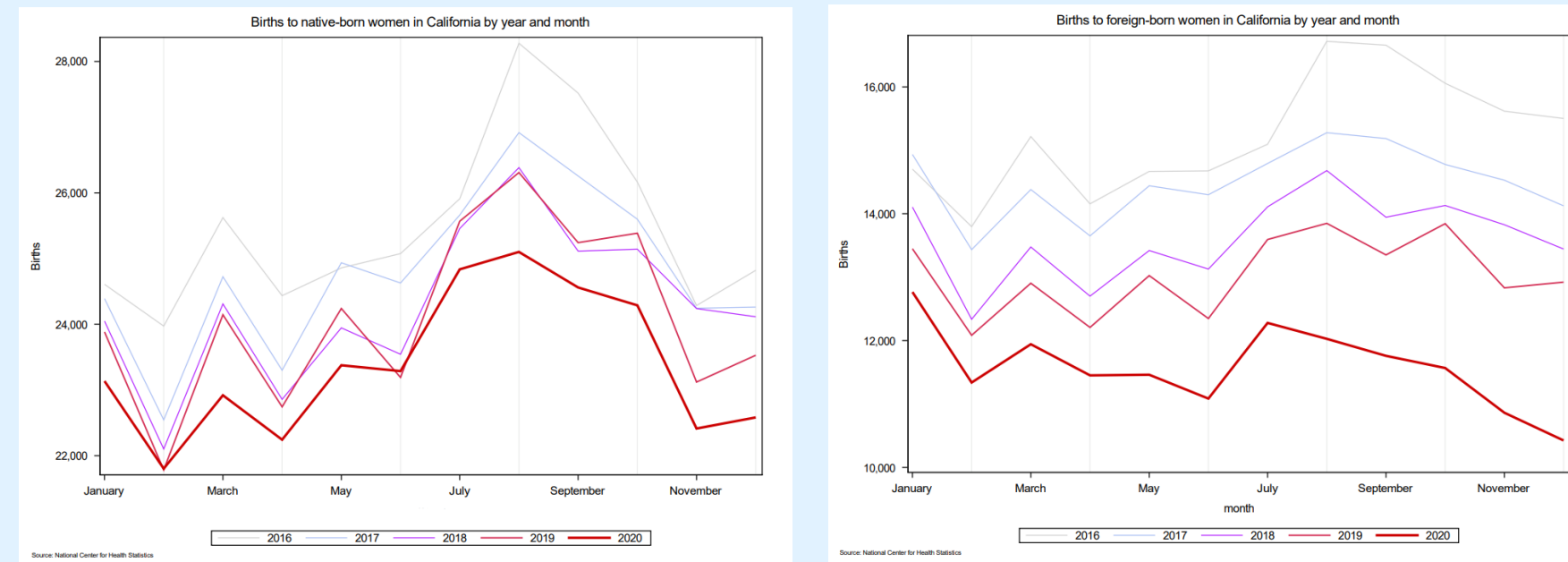


States: An Uneven Dip by Nativity

California, Florida, New York and Texas are the states with the largest number of births to foreign-born women. Birth patterns in these states differed greatly by nativity during the pandemic.

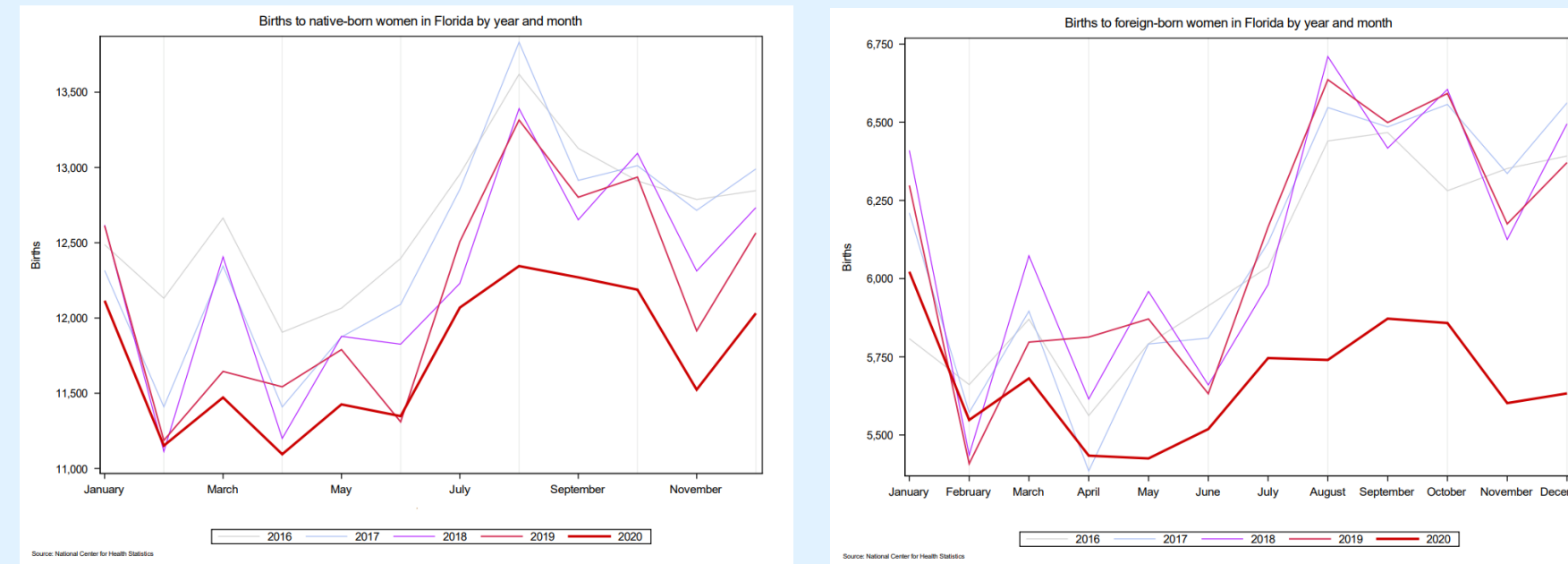
California

Births to native-born women declined some, but births to foreign-born women made up most of the decline.



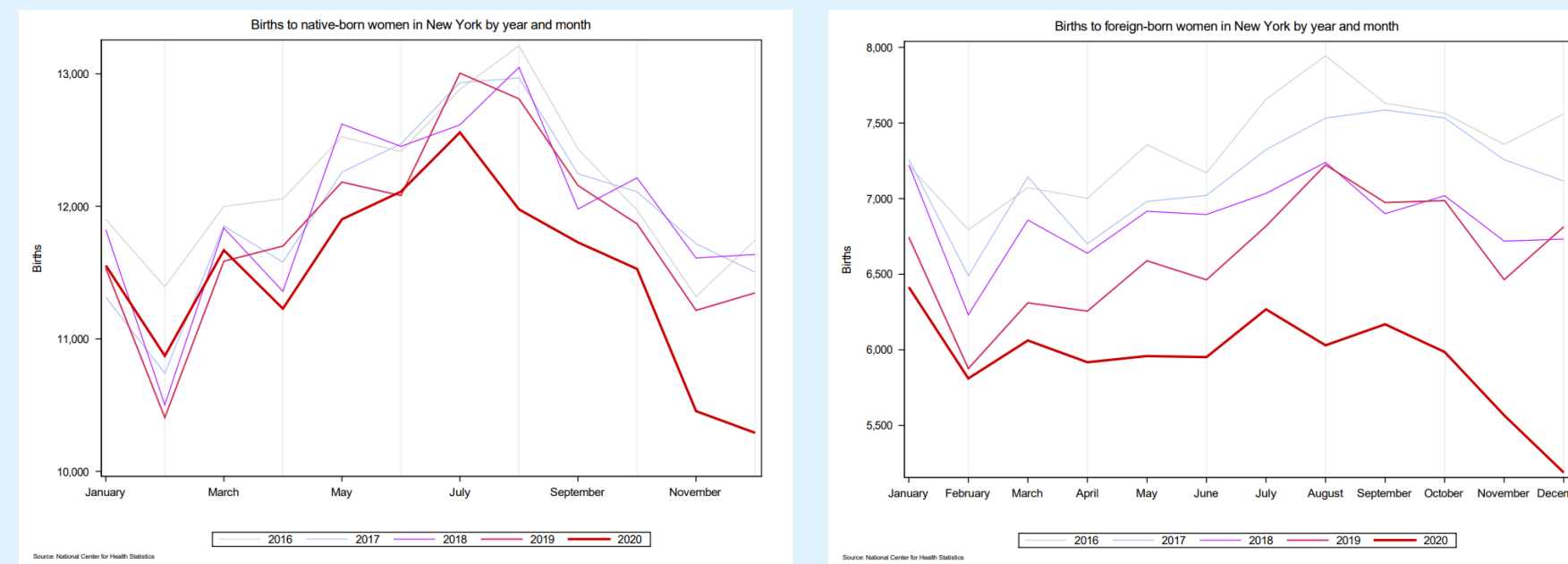
Florida

Births to foreign-born women were dramatically lower in the second half of 2020 relative to previous years.



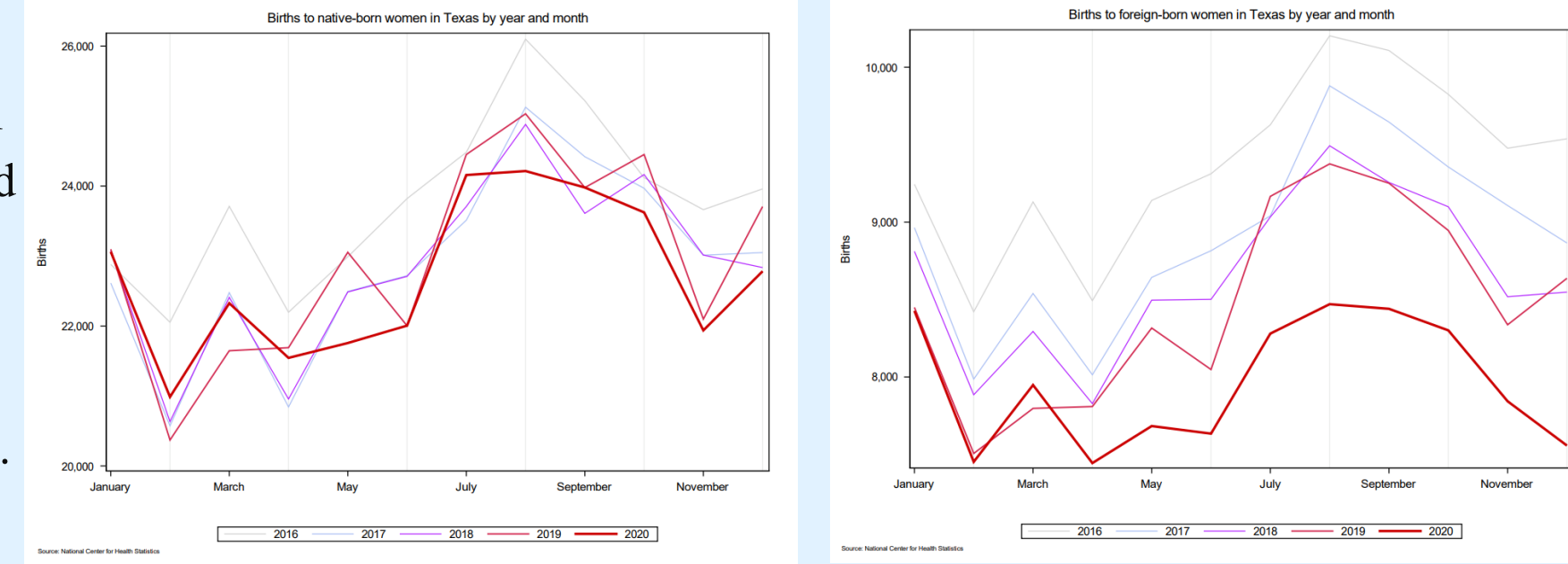
New York

Births to native-born women declined in the winter of 2020, but the earlier declines were predominately to foreign-born women.



Texas

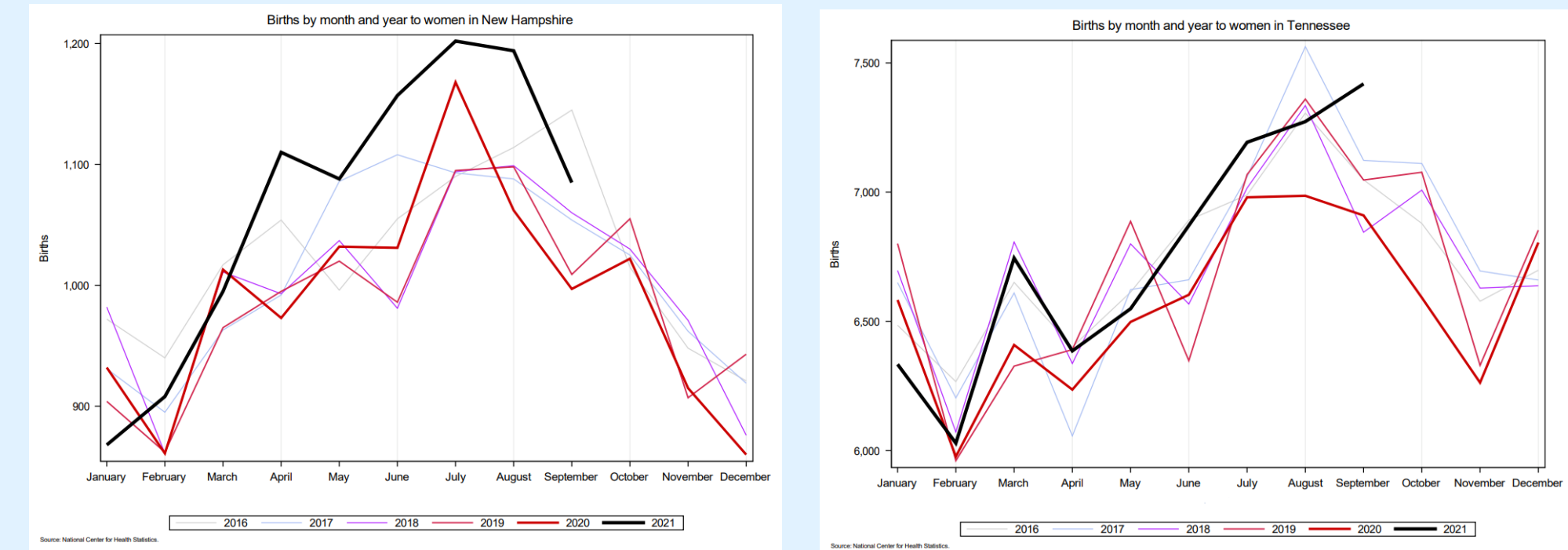
Births to native-born women only declined slightly over 2020. The vast majority of the decline was to foreign-born women.



States: An Uneven Rebound

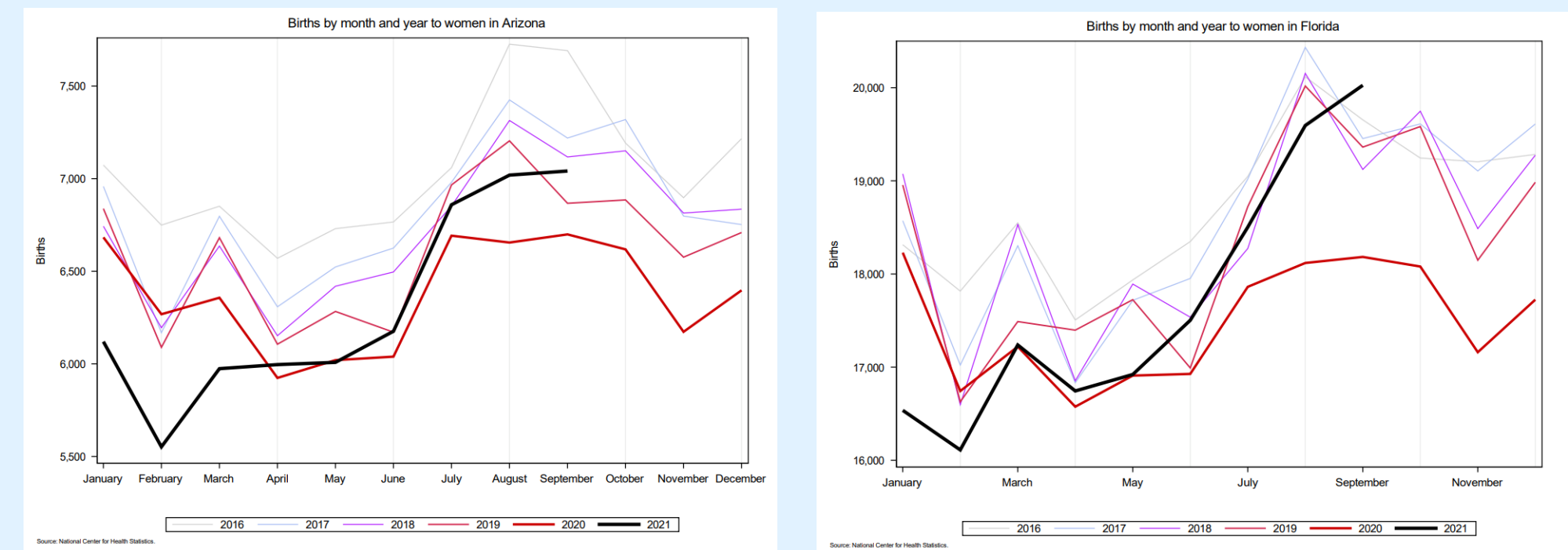
Baby boom: minimal decline and substantial increase

Several states had minimal declines in 2020, but notable increases in 2021. These states include Arkansas, Colorado, Connecticut, Idaho, Maine, New Hampshire, South Carolina, and Tennessee.



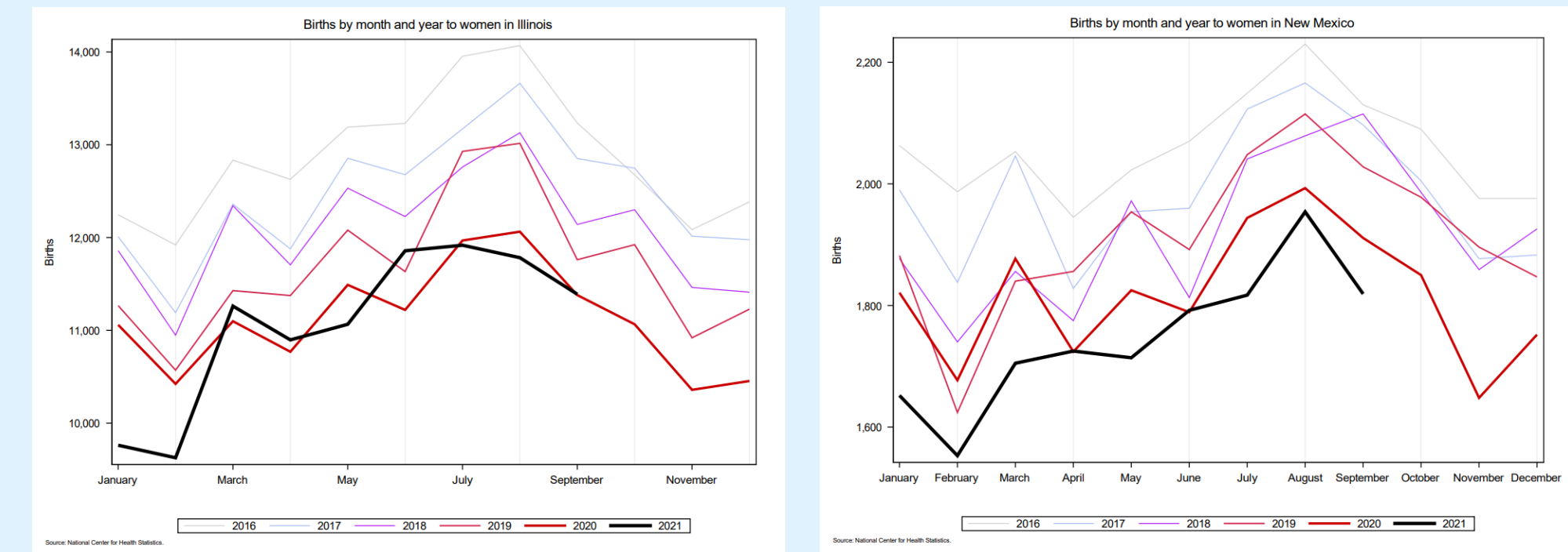
Rebounders: large declines and substantial recoveries

Most states belong in this category. Births were anomalously low in 2020 relative to 2019 but there were more births in the summer of 2021 than in the summer of 2020.



Decline and no rebound

Several states had notable declines, and by the summer of 2021 their births still had not consistently increased from their 2020 numbers. These states include Illinois, Mississippi, Missouri, and New Mexico.



This poster is released to inform interested parties of ongoing research and to encourage discussion. Any views expressed are those of the authors and not necessarily those of the U.S. Census Bureau.