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Highlights from January 31, 2018 National Center for Health Statistics Report titled “Births: Final Data for 2016” with Comparison to Prior Data on Births

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This annual report from the National Center for Health Statistics shows a variety of statistics related to births and the characteristics of mothers. While trends in births by age of mother tend to get more attention, trends in the number and rate of births by race and ethnicity are also important. This summary describes such trends over time. Birth-related data by race and ethnicity using current standard definitions go back to 1989. However, rates influenced by population totals are more consistent from 1990 onward, given the availability of 1990 and subsequent decennial census results. Thus, we can readily compare figures over a 27-year timeframe from 1990 to 2016 (for comparison to earlier data, the 2016 data from supplemental tables for “bridged” racial categories are used in this analysis).

Here are relevant highlights from the report, comparing the current new data to past information. The highlights are presented in no particular order. Any mentions of Whites or Blacks refer to non-Hispanic Whites and non-Hispanic Blacks.

1. The total number of U.S. births to non-Hispanic White mothers (2,094,054) and the percentage of all births to such mothers (53.1%) each established a new low. Non-Hispanic White births declined by more than 36,000 or 1.7% from the 2015 level of 2,130,279. White births in the U.S. have trended downward from their highest value in this data starting in 1990, when there were more than 2.6 million births to non-Hispanic White mothers, representing 64.2% of all U.S. births.
2. Births to non-Hispanic Black mothers (583,786) and Hispanic mothers (918,447) fell 0.9% and 0.6% from their 2015 levels. Conversely, births to all other mothers (primarily Asian and American Indian) set a new high of nearly 350,000. The percentage of all U.S. births to mothers in this category also set a new high of 8.9%. In 1990, only 5.1% of U.S. births were to mothers in this category. Hispanics accounted for 24.6 of births in 2007 prior to the economic recession; in 2016, the figure stood at 23.3% of all U.S. births, up from 14.5% in 1990.
3. The general fertility rate in the U.S. hit an all-time low in 2016, at 62.0 births per 1,000 women aged 15-44 (data go back to at least 1940). By race and ethnicity, the fertility rate for both Hispanics (70.6) and non-Hispanic Blacks (63.3) stood at the lowest level since the data series began in 1990. At that time, the rates were 107.7 and 89.0 respectively, and the highest over this timeframe. Thus, Hispanic fertility rates are down 34% since 1990, while Blacks have witnessed a 29% decline. Among all women, the decline has been 13% (from 71.0 in 1990 to the current 62.0) and among non-Hispanic Whites fertility rates have decreased 6% (from 62.8 to 58.8). White fertility rates today are above the lowest level of 56.8 seen in 1997, but remain the lowest rate among major races and ethnicities. See table below.

Fertility Rate (Births per 1,000 Women Aged 15-44)				
Year	All Women	White, non Hispanic	Black, non Hispanic	Hispanic
1990	71.0	62.8	89.0	107.7
1997	63.6	56.8	70.3	94.2
2016	62.0	58.8	63.3	70.6
1990 to 2016 Percent Change:				
	-12.7%	-6.4%	-28.9%	-34.4%

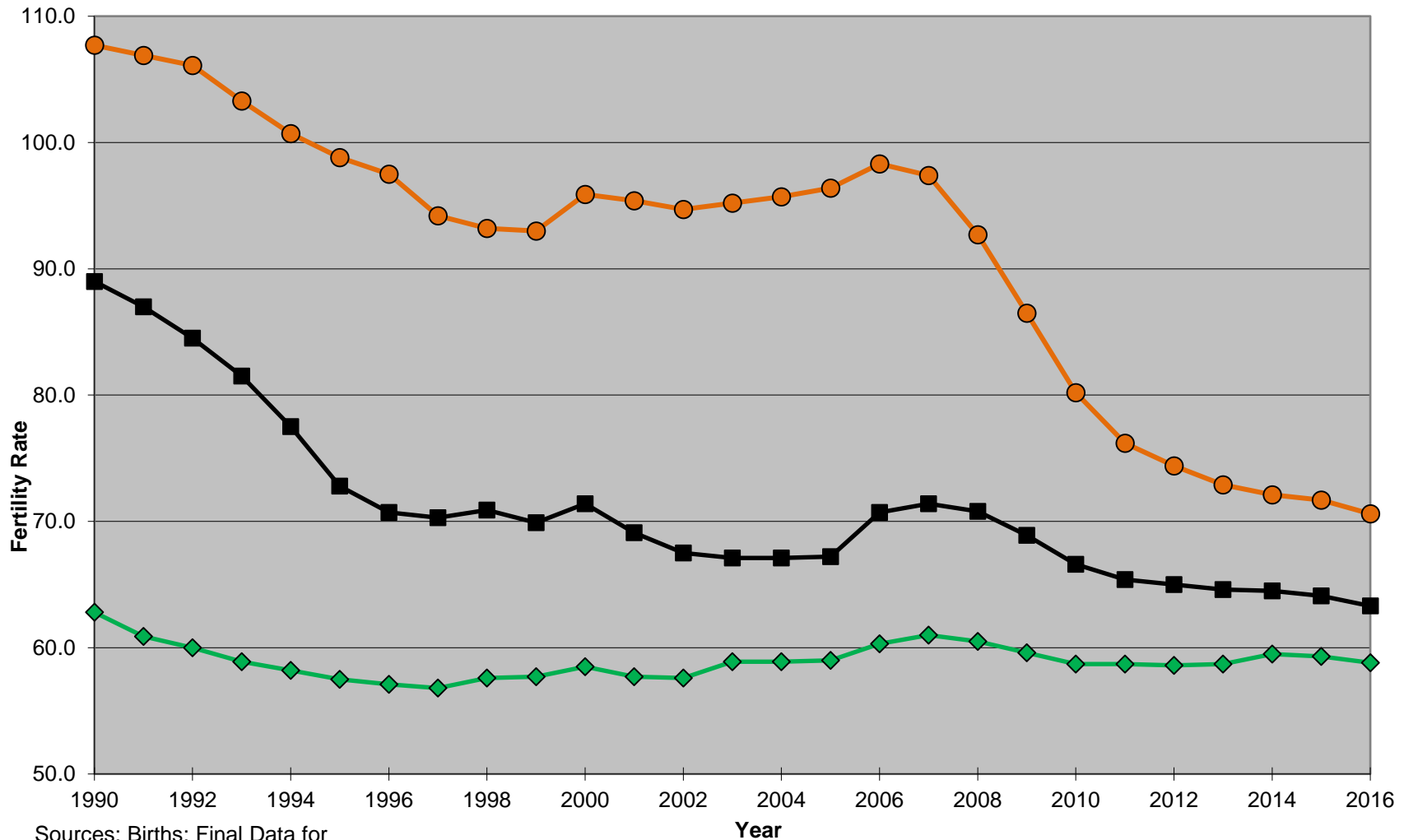
Note: Green shows series high; orange the low.

- With fertility rates declining at a faster pace among major minority population groups, the gap in the fertility rates when compared to non-Hispanic Whites now stands at a series low. In 1990, there were about 45 more births per thousand Hispanic women aged 15-44 than among Whites of the same age (107.7 vs. 62.8). That difference has consistently narrowed over time, with the Hispanic fertility rate now exceeding that of Whites by only 12 per thousand women of reproductive age. These data are graphed on page 6. Likewise, the fertility rate difference for non-Hispanic Blacks versus non-Hispanic Whites stood at a series high of 26.2 points (89.0 vs. 62.8) in 1990, but has now declined to a series low of only 4.5 points in 2016 (fertility rate of 63.3 among Blacks versus 58.8 among Whites). The fertility rate difference between Hispanics and non-Hispanic Blacks is also at its lowest point since 1990, standing at only 7.3 points in 2016 (70.6 vs. 63.3).
- A key measure of fertility is called the total fertility rate (TFR), or the number of births a hypothetical cohort of 1,000 women would have over their lifetimes, given the age-specific birth rates in that year (assuming those rates would hold over their lifetime). To replace the population, accounting for deaths, the group would need to have 2,100 births or an average of 2.1 per woman by the end of their reproductive years. **In 2016, total fertility rates among all women and each major racial group hit series lows. In addition, the rate among Hispanic women fell below the replacement level of 2,100 for the first time (2,092.5).** The Black TFR has been below replacement since 2009, and the White TFR has been below 2,100 every year since 1990. See graph on page 5.

Total Fertility Rate (Lifetime Births of 1,000 Women)				
Year	All Women	White, non Hispanic	Black, non Hispanic	Hispanic
1990	2,081.0	1,850.5	2,547.5	2,959.5
1991	2,062.5	1,822.5	2,532.0	2,963.5
2007	2,120.0	1,908.0	2,142.0	2,840.0
2016	1,820.5	1,718.0	1,831.0	2,092.5
1990 to 2016 Percent Change:				
	-12.5%	-7.2%	-28.1%	-29.3%

6. In the early 1990s, the Hispanic TFR stood at nearly 3,000. Thus, it has declined by about 29%. The Black TFR was highest in 1990 at 2,547.5; the current level of 1,831 represents a similar 28% decline. For comparison, the TFR among all women has declined by 13% with the White TFR decreasing by 7%. The White TFR stands at only 1,718, the lowest level among these major racial and ethnic groups.
7. The TFR among all women and Hispanic women was highest in 2007, prior to the economic recession. Pages 4 and 5 show how fertility rates have changed since 1990.
8. The gaps in total fertility among the races have declined. The graph on page 7 illustrates that a cohort of 1,000 Hispanic women used to have more than 1,100 more children over their lifetime than a cohort of 1,000 non-Hispanic White women. In 2016, that differential had decreased to only 375 more children for the Hispanic cohort of women. Likewise, a cohort of 1,000 Black women were expected to have about 700 more children over their lifetimes than White women in 1990, but that differential is only 113 more children today.
9. The report provided state level TFR data for 2016. **Nebraska was one of five states to be above the replacement value of 2,100.** Nebraska's TFR of 2,137 ranks 5th highest, following South Dakota, Utah, North Dakota, and Alaska. Other states in the region and Great Plains also ranked relatively high, with Texas, Kansas, Iowa and Oklahoma placing in the top 10 regarding total fertility rates. Nebraska's TFR is 17% above the U.S. average and 39% higher than the state with the lowest TFR (Massachusetts: 1,541).
10. Nebraska fertility rates by race and ethnicity have changed over time. Between 1992 and 2008, Hispanic rates were above 120 births per thousand Hispanic women aged 15-44. See graph on page 8. They fell rapidly during the recession, with the rate bottoming at 93 in 2011. Black fertility rates in Nebraska did not fall much during the recession, and have exceeded the Hispanic rate since 2011. Nebraska White fertility rates have held steady around 70 births per thousand White women since the mid-2000s.
11. Nebraska's general fertility rate (births per 1,000 women aged 15-44) was also 17% above the U.S. average in 2016. This measure has steadily trended upward over time. See graph on page 9. Prior to 1999, Nebraska's fertility rate was below the U.S. average. By the mid-2000s, it was about 10% above the U.S. average, and the uptrend has continued to the present time. The fertility rate of Nebraska Black residents has especially trended upward compared to the U.S. average, and now stands 50% higher than the U.S. rate. Fertility rates for Nebraska Hispanics currently are about 30% above the U.S. average, and the non-Hispanic White fertility rate is 15% above the U.S.
12. While not the focus of this summary, fertility rates among various age groups are also changing. Fertility rates for those in their teens (15-19) and early 20s (20-24) fell to record lows in 2016. Conversely, the 2016 births report indicated that fertility rates for those in their early 30s (30-34), late 30s (35-39) and early 40s (40-44) all increased, and hit levels not seen since 1964, 1962, and 1966 respectively. These patterns of "delayed" childbearing have an impact on total fertility, as first births occurring later in life compress the timeframe over which women can have additional births to achieve larger family sizes. These changes in births and lifetime fertility influence the demographic makeup of the country, and affect the characteristics of items like the current and future labor force, and many programs such as Social Security (the number of individuals available to contribute to the program into the future, impacting its solvency).

Comparison of Fertility Rates (Births per 1,000 Women Aged 15-44) by Race and Ethnicity, U.S.: 1990 to 2016

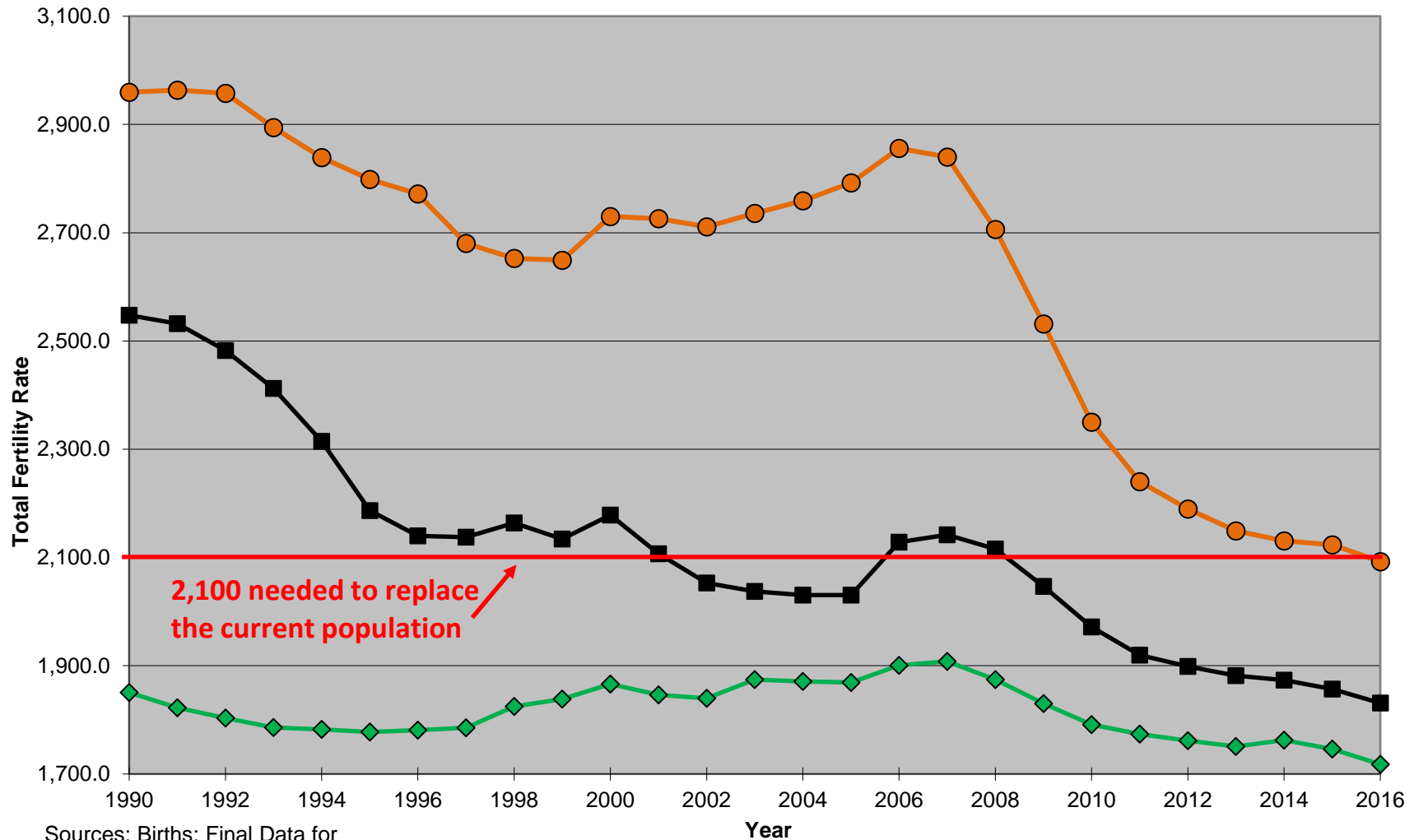


Sources: Births: Final Data for 2016 and prior reports, National Center for Health Statistics

◆ White, non Hispanic ■ Black, non Hispanic ● Hispanic

Compiled by: David Drozd, UNO Center for Public Affairs Research

Comparison of Total Fertility Rates (Births for 1,000 Women over a Lifetime) by Race and Ethnicity, U.S.: 1990 to 2016

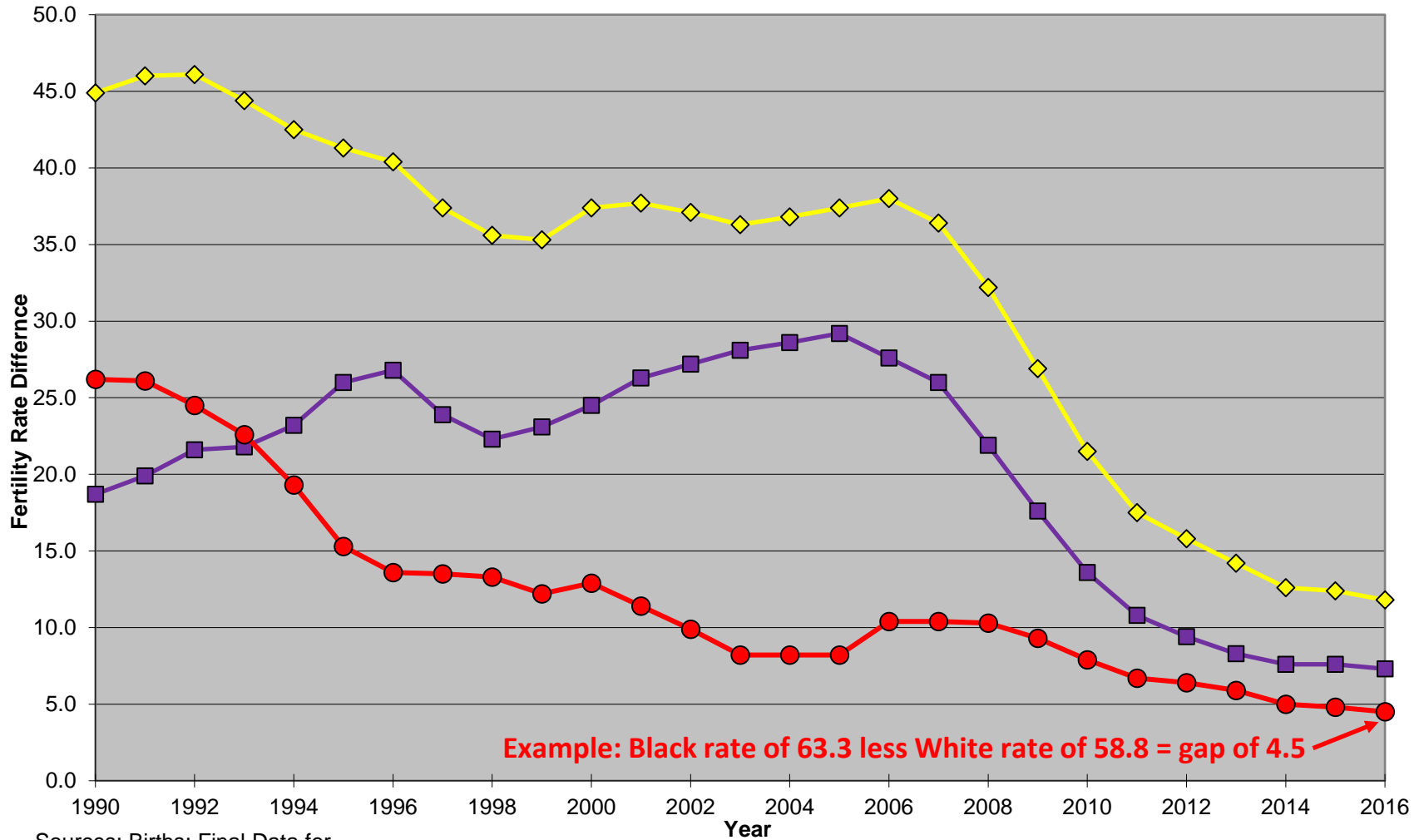


Sources: Births: Final Data for 2016 and prior reports, National Center for Health Statistics

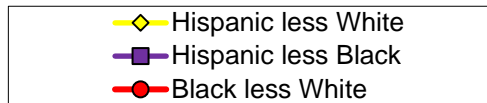
◆ White, non Hispanic ■ Black, non Hispanic ● Hispanic

Compiled by: David Drozd, UNO Center for Public Affairs Research

Difference in Fertility Rates (Births per 1,000 Women Aged 15-44) by Race and Ethnicity, U.S.: 1990 to 2016

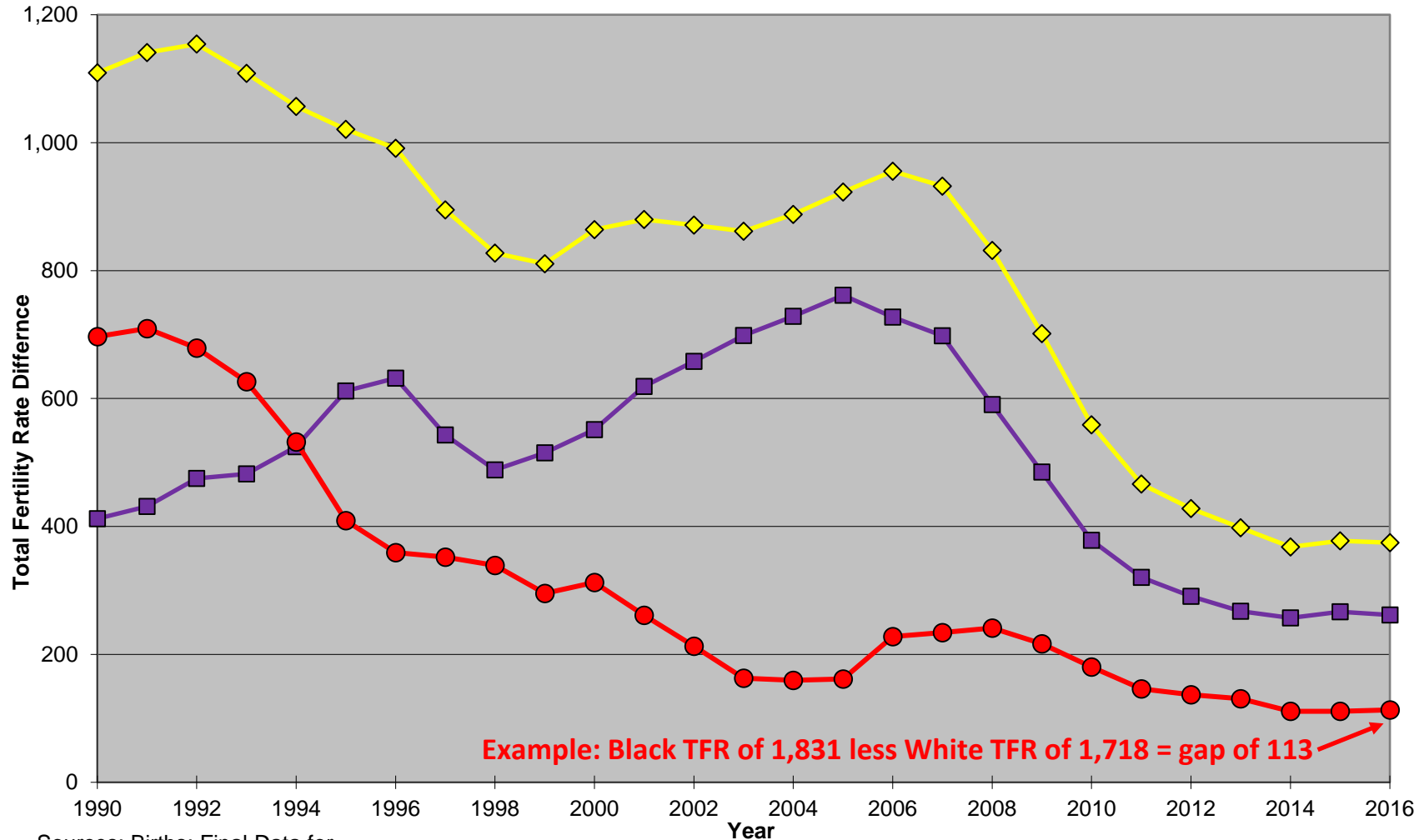


Sources: Births: Final Data for 2016 and prior reports, National Center for Health Statistics

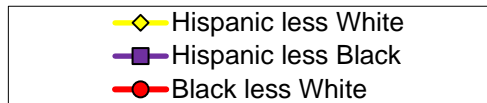


Compiled by: David Drozd, UNO Center for Public Affairs Research

Difference in Total Fertility Rates (Births for 1,000 Women over a Lifetime) by Race and Ethnicity, U.S.: 1990 to 2016

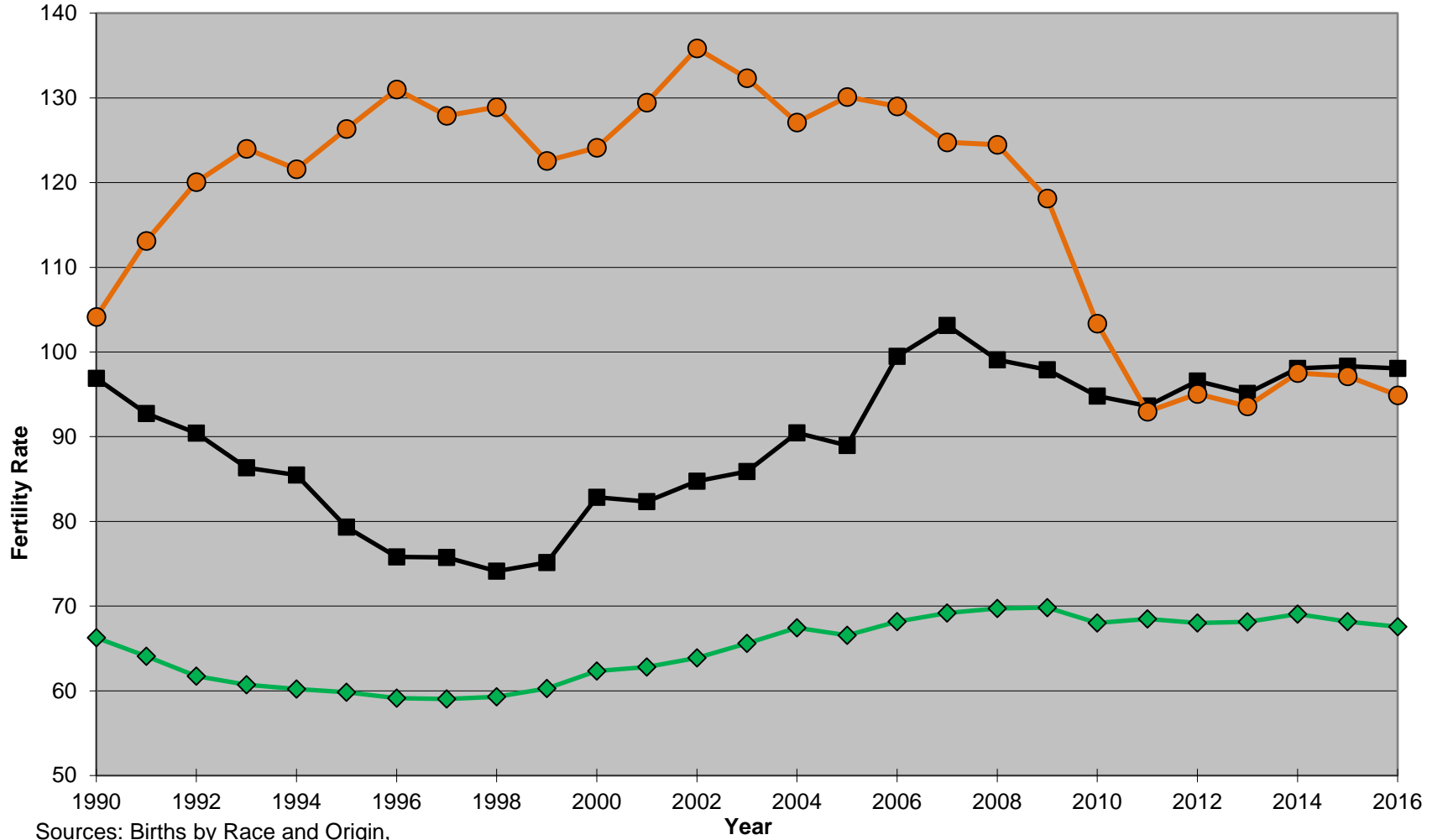


Sources: Births: Final Data for 2016 and prior reports, National Center for Health Statistics

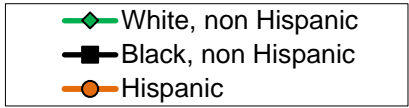


Compiled by: David Drozd, UNO Center for Public Affairs Research

Comparison of Fertility Rates (Births per 1,000 Women Aged 15-44) by Race and Ethnicity, Nebraska: 1990 to 2016

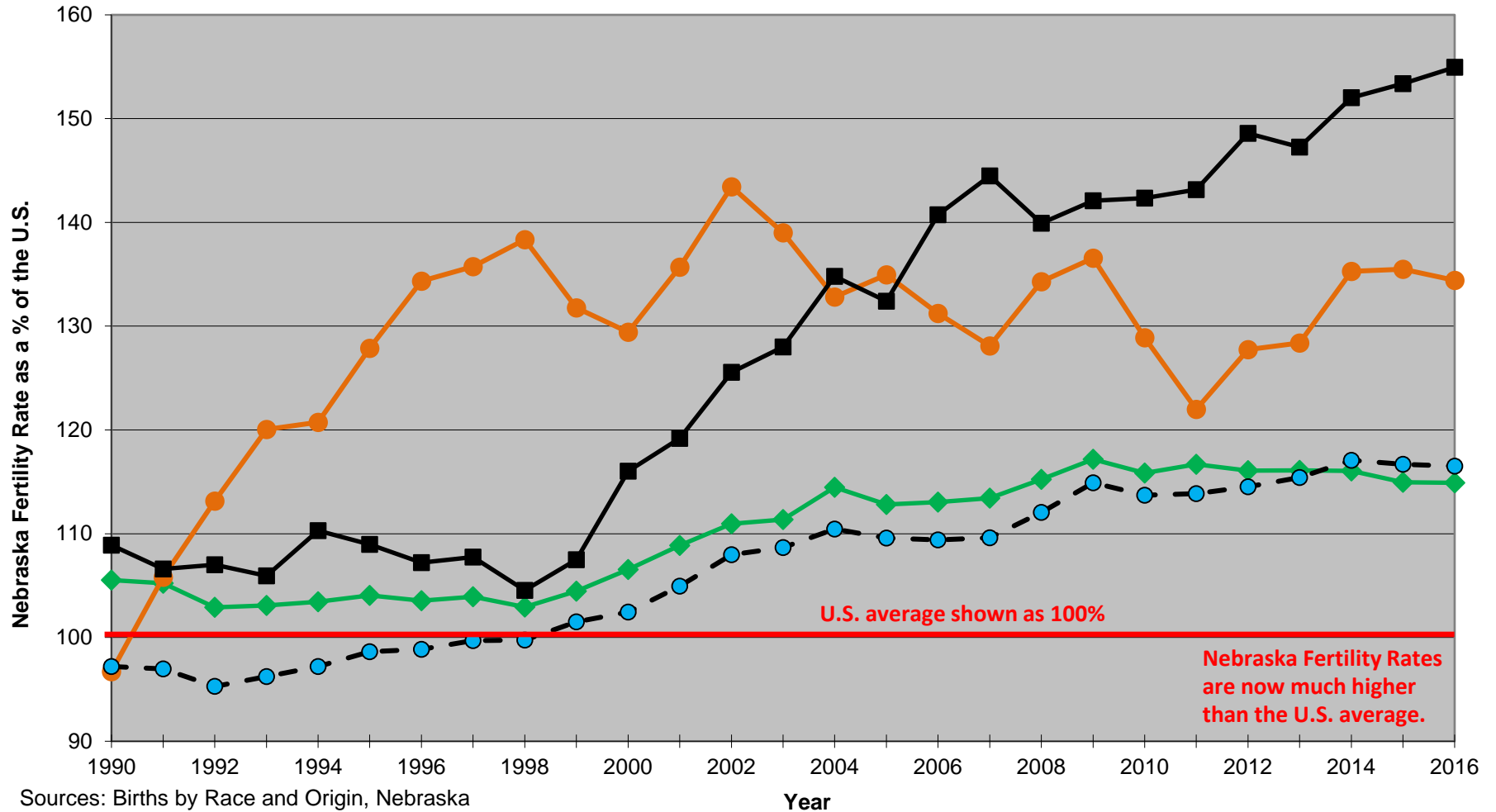


Sources: Births by Race and Origin, Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services; Population Estimates by Race/Ethnicity, U.S. Census Bureau



Compiled by: David Drozd, UNO Center for Public Affairs Research

Comparison of Nebraska Fertility Rates (Births per 1,000 Women Aged 15-44) as a Percentage of the U.S. by Race and Ethnicity: 1990 to 2016



Sources: Births by Race and Origin, Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services; Population Estimates by Race/Ethnicity, U.S. Census Bureau; Births: Final Data for 2016, NCHS



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