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Three Years of Record High Mortality and Low Fertility Leave Many States with More Deaths than Births

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Recent fertility and mortality data reflect Covid's continued grim impact on U.S. demographic trends. From 2020 to 2022, there were 1.26 million Covid deaths, excluding the excess deaths from conditions aggravated by the pandemic. Deaths increased significantly in every state. Between 2020 and 2022, the United States averaged 3,373,000 deaths annually: the most in history and 18 percent more than in 2019. In the same period, births declined by 3 percent to 3,645,000 annually. The net result was a 74 percent decline in the surplus of births over deaths from 892,000 in 2019 to an average of just 272,000 annually between 2020 and 2022: the smallest annual natural gains in a century. In 24 states, the substantial rise in deaths combined with fewer births produced a natural decline in the population over the three years of the pandemic. Deaths exceeded births in 20 states in all three pandemic years, 3 states in two years, and 4 in one year (Figure 1). In contrast, births consistently exceeded deaths in just 24 states including D.C., though the gap between births and deaths narrowed significantly in many of these states during the pandemic. Such widespread natural decline is unprecedented. At least 22 states had a natural decline in each of the three pandemic years. Prior to the pandemic, the most states with more deaths than births in a year was 5 in 2019. There will be fewer states with more deaths than births in 2023 if the recent reductions in Covid deaths persist. But many of the demographic factors contributing to rising mortality and declining fertility predate the pandemic, so deaths will continue to exceed births in some states in the near term and in more states in the future.



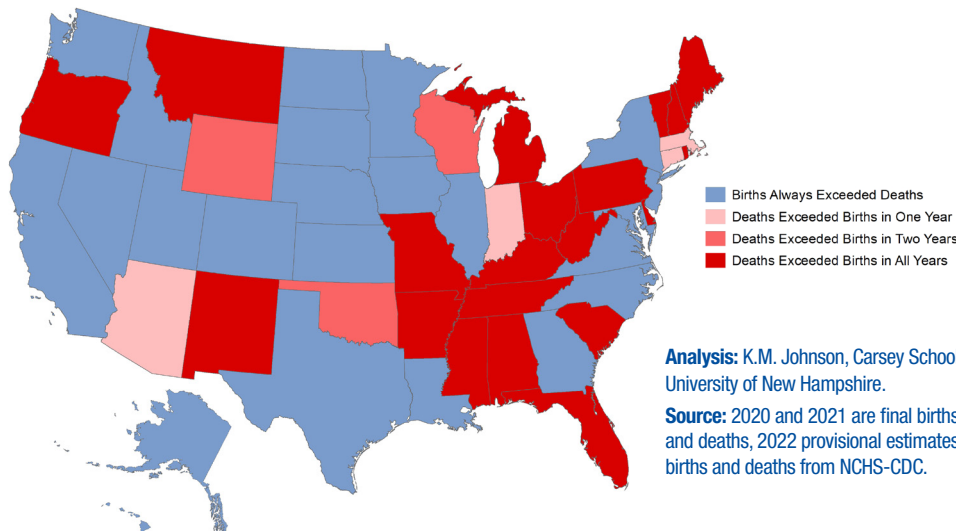
With Covid-induced mortality at record highs and continuing low fertility during the past three years, U.S. births exceeded deaths by the smallest margin in more than a century.

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FIGURE 1. NUMBER OF YEARS THAT DEATHS EXCEED BIRTHS IN STATES, 2020 TO 2022



About the Author

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