

TARRANT COUNTY PUBLIC HEALTH DATA BRIEF



PATERNAL STATUS IN TARRANT COUNTY

Paternity acknowledgment is recorded on the birth certificate for mothers who are unmarried at the time of birth. For this analysis project, when paternity acknowledgement was unavailable, the **presence of father data** (such as age) were used as a **proxy** for paternity acknowledgement among births to unmarried mothers.

Paternity acknowledgment on a birth certificate impacts legal rights and responsibilities of the father such as custody, child support, and child access to health insurance and social security. These benefits may positively influence maternal-child health and well-being.

- In 2024, the **majority** of live births in Tarrant County were to **married parents** (60%), 31% of live births were to non-married parents with paternity acknowledgement, and **9%** of live births **had no paternity acknowledgement**
- Live births with **no paternity acknowledgement** had **significantly higher** rates of:
 - Medicaid as payment source
 - Enrolled in WIC during pregnancy
 - Maternal infections
 - Preterm birth
 - NICU admission
 - Infant mortality
- Live births with **no paternity acknowledgement** had **significantly lower** rates of:
 - Starting prenatal care on time
 - Breastfeeding at discharge from place of birth

Figure 1. Paternity status among live births in the United States, Texas, and select counties, 2024

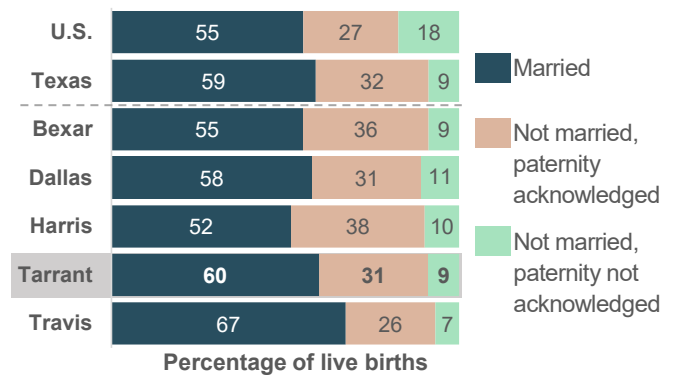
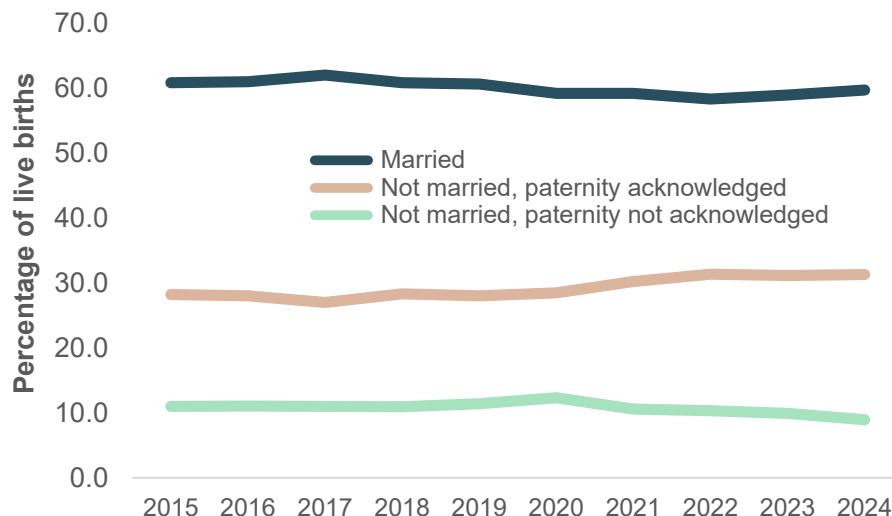
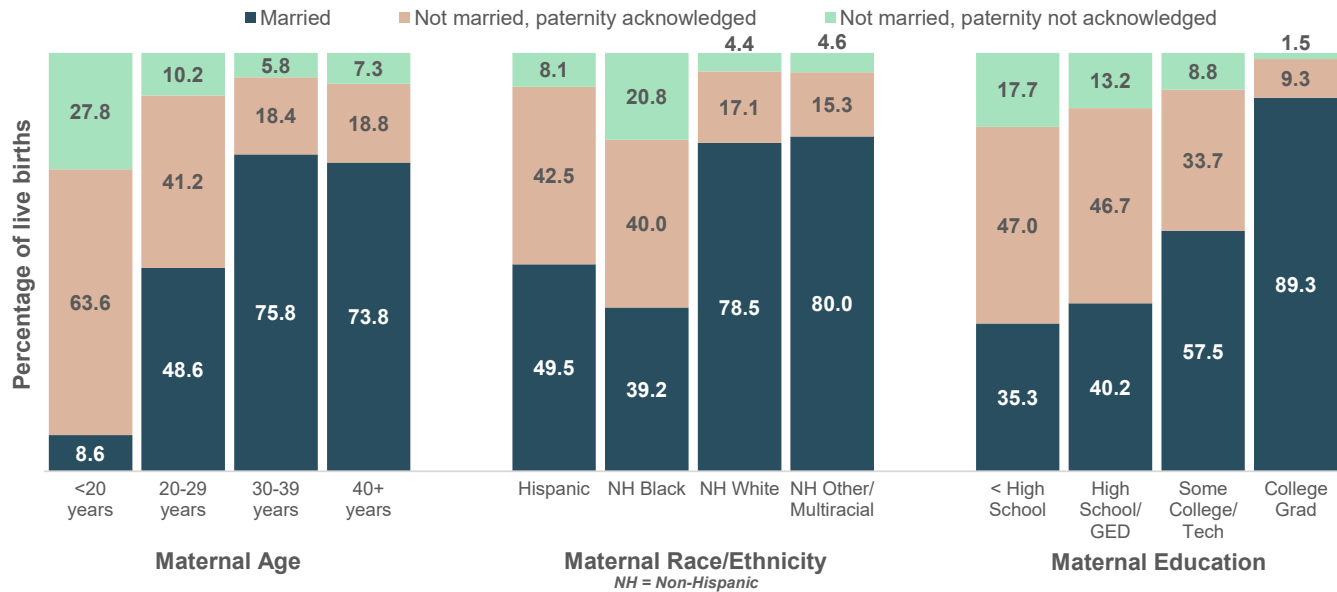


Figure 2. Paternity status among Tarrant County live births, 2015-2024



From 2015 to 2024, the percentage of live births to not married parents with paternity acknowledged **increased significantly**, while births to not married parents with no paternity acknowledged **decreased significantly**

Figure 3. Paternity status at time of birth by maternal characteristics, Tarrant County, 2024



The percentage of live births with **no paternity acknowledgement** was **highest** among mothers **under the age of 20, non-Hispanic Black** mothers, and mothers with **less than a high school education**

Figure 4. Infant and maternal characteristics among Tarrant County live births by paternity status, 2024

Infant characteristics	Married		NM, paternity acknowledged		NM, paternity not acknowledged
Preterm birth (<37 weeks)	9.9%	↑	10.8%	↑	15.4%
NICU admission	8.4%	↑	9.5%	↑	14.5%
Infant mortality rate	4.63	↓	5.00	↑	10.56
Maternal characteristics					
Started prenatal care on time	68.8%	↓	50.9%	↓	41.3%
<18 months between pregnancies	8.8%	↑	13.4%	↑	14.6%
Medicaid	25.0%	↑	60.7%	↑	64.1%
Enrolled in WIC during pregnancy	15.8%	↑	38.9%	↑	41.8%
Maternal infection*	2.1%	↑	6.0%	↑	10.4%
Cesarean delivery	35.4%	↓	33.3%	↑	34.3%
Breastfeeding at discharge	93.6%	↓	88.3%	↓	77.8%

NM = not married; Infant mortality rate = number of deaths among infants under one year of age per 1,000 live births
 *Maternal infections of Gonorrhea, Syphilis, Chlamydia, Hepatitis B, or Hepatitis C present and/or treated during pregnancy
 Note: Any up or down arrows denote statistically significant difference between the two values (p<0.05)
 Comparisons are between 1. Married and Not married with paternity acknowledged and 2. Not married with paternity acknowledged and Not married with paternity not acknowledged

Fatherhood resources:

Tarrant County Fatherhood Coalition [www.tarrantfatherhood.com]
Dad’s Resource Guide (Tarrant County) [www.workforcesolutions.net/services]
Parenting and Paternity Awareness (P.A.P.A.) [www.texasattorneygeneral.gov]
National Responsible Fatherhood Clearinghouse [www.fatherhood.gov/for-dads]