**Fiscal Facts: Birth Rate Affected by Population Age, Economy**

Birth and fertility rates are influenced by a variety of demographic, social, and economic factors. Nationally and in Wisconsin, an aging population has put downward pressure on the birth rate, as a smaller share of women are capable of bearing children. Additionally, couples tend to postpone having children when the economy is weak.

The decline in the birth rate over the years can be partially explained by the shrinking share of women between the ages of 15 and 44. While the total population of Wisconsin has continued to increase over the past three decades, the state has fewer women of child-bearing age now (1.08 million) than it did in 1989 (1.12 million). Similarly, because most births occur with mothers between ages 20 and 34, a drop in the share of women in those peak years can also lower the fertility rate.

Additionally, there is evidence to suggest that couples tend to postpone child-bearing during economic declines. The Pew Research Center found that states with the largest downturns in 2007-08 were most likely to experience large drops in fertility in the following years. The coming years will clarify whether the recent drop in fertility is a temporary or lasting change.

*This information is a service of the Wisconsin Policy Forum, the state’s leading resource for nonpartisan state and local government research and civic education.*