Births are an important part of the population landscape of Wisconsin because they represent the growth and future of the state. Trends in births now can lead to population shifts that will be important in later years. Birth data are especially important to the Applied Population Laboratory as we rely on them to help project school enrollments for interested districts.

In 2006, the most recent year for which data were reported, there were 72,302 reported births in the State of Wisconsin. This is a rebound from the recent lows experienced in the mid-to-late 1990s. (Chart 1, pg. 2.) As might be expected, Milwaukee County was the county that saw the largest number of births in 2006. However, Milwaukee County did not actually see much growth. St. Croix County saw the most growth in births in the state, with a 59% increase in the ten-year period between 1996 and 2006. (Map 1, pg. 1.) Florence and Iron Counties were at the low end of growth, with more than a 45% decrease in births. (However, these counties’ small birth numbers make it prone to greater swings in percentage changes, in general.) Much of the growth in the state is along the western and southern regions of Wisconsin. The northern and central regions saw less growth than other areas.

The General Fertility Rate (GFR) is a measure that gives a more precise picture of fertility than total births by focusing only on the population that produces nearly all births: females age 15 to 44. (Map 2, pg. 3.) The GFR does not penalize places for having few women of childbearing age, which would be important to counties that skew towards an older or heavily male population. Counties with substantially different numbers of total births could potentially have very similar GFRs. In 2006, Menominee County saw a very high GFR of 126.49, which translates to about 126 births for every 1,000 females within the 15 to 44 age bracket. This is perhaps due to the large percentage of births to American Indian mothers in this county. Once again, Florence and Iron Counties appeared on the low end of the scale with fewer than 40 births for every 1,000 females. This may indicate

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that Florence and Iron Counties’ low birth numbers may have as much to do with a small number of females of childbearing age as it does with their overall fertility. The GFR for the entire state was 63.41 in 2006.

Most births are to mothers 20 to 34 years of age. (Chart 2, pg. 2.) The peak occurs in the 25 to 29 year age bracket. This fact is important to places with few females within those age groups.

In 2006, the majority of births in Wisconsin were to white mothers (75%). Births to Hispanic mothers (9.5%) were nearing the percentage of births to non-Hispanic black mothers (9.7%). And while there was an 8% increase in total births in the ten-year period between 1996 and 2006, there was about a 1% decrease in the number of births to non-Hispanic white mothers. (Chart 3, pg. 2.) That indicates that all growth between 1996 and 2006 was due to births to mothers of minority populations. The Hispanic population is seeing particularly rapid growth in births. Future births in the state will likely continue to increase due to Wisconsin’s growing minority population. Since births are strongly tied to the number of females within the prime childbearing ages, counties that are growing may want to take an especially close look at the age groups that they are attracting. Housing directed at seniors or seasonal homeowners will not necessarily see an increase in births or school-age children, which is important information for school districts. Additionally, fertility practices and preferences may change in the future which has the potential to greatly affect the total number of births in the state.

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**ON THE WEB: WISH Web Query System**

The data used in the main article of this newsletter were made available through the Wisconsin Department of Health and Family Services’ (DHFS) Wisconsin Interactive Statistics on Health (WISH) web query system. DHFS’s Bureau of Health Information and Policy supports this online system that makes statistics on birth counts, fertility and mortality rates, injuries, and violent deaths available to the public. Data are available at the state-, region-, county-, and city-level and, in most instances, date back to 1989. The Birth Counts Module allows for refinement of data to include information on maternal characteristics, like age and race; infant characteristics, like birthweight and sex; and health care characteristics, like adequacy of prenatal care. Birth count data is especially useful to our School Enrollment Projections Program, and it is easy to imagine other instances in which these data would be useful to local planning and health initiatives. Visit the WISH web query system at http://dhfs.wisconsin.gov/wish/.

**ON THE HORIZON**

—Wisconsin Land Information Association (WLIA) Annual Conference, February 27-29, Lake Geneva, WI.

—Wisconsin American Planning Association (WAPA)/ Wisconsin Chapter of the American Society of Landscape Architects (WI-ASLA) Spring Workshop Conference, March 27, Madison, WI.

—Association of American Geographers (AAG) Annual Meeting, April 15-19, Boston, MA.

—Population Association of America (PAA) Annual Meeting, April 17-19, New Orleans, LA.

—American Planning Association (APA) Annual Meeting, April 27 - May 1, 2008, Las Vegas, NV.

—Wisconsin Association of School District Administrators (WASDA) Annual Education Conference, April 23-25, Elkhart Lake, WI.

—Wisconsin Association of School Business Officials (WASBO) Spring Conference, May 20-23, Wisconsin Dells, WI.
STAFF SPOTLIGHT: DAVID LONG

David Long came to the APL nine years ago with a MS in Sociology from the UW-Madison where he focused his studies on sprawl and the politics of suburban land use. During his tenure at the APL he has researched spatial analytic methods, the intersection of biophysical landscape characteristics with population data, and child poverty using spatial regression analysis. He returned last fall from a year spent in Veracruz, Mexico with a heightened interest in Wisconsin immigration and the growing Latino population. His recent work focuses on methods for building capacity in community organizations through access to GIS resources and demographic data.

FROM THE DIRECTOR’S DESK

This issue of Population Notes focuses on trends in births in Wisconsin and we’d like to take a moment to celebrate a special birth and the inspiration for this newsletter. Kian Daniel Stolte was born on January 5, 2008, to APL staffer Sara Lazenby and her partner Ryan Stolte. Kian and Sara have visited the APL several times and both are doing great. So, Kian and Sarah and Ryan have done their part to become part of the trend in births in Wisconsin. Data on births and other vital statistics form the bedrock of much of the work that the APL does in the realm of population estimates and projections. However, birth trends reveal much more than simple vital events. Embedded in the birth trends are glimpses of changes or trends in communities, family structure, economic stability, the age structure of the adult population, migration/immigration, and in some senses, patterns of residential choices and distribution of the population. Our ability to make use of birth data has come a long way over the last few years and we hope to take advantage of emerging approaches using more refined geographic information about births to continue on that path. Once again, we say mazel tov to Sara and Ryan and welcome baby Kian to the world.

Regards, Dan

Trivia Question:

What were the most popular baby names for 2006 in Wisconsin?

For girls, the most popular name was Ava. For boys, the number one pick was Ethan.