

9.6 College education and age at first birth

We mentioned in Problem 7.4 that first-time mothers in San Francisco are older than in other parts of the US. Besides geographic location, another predictor of age at first birth mentioned in the New York Times article is education level. {Bui, 2018 #1579} According to the article, "Women with college degrees have children an average of seven years later than those without — and often use the years in between to finish school and build their careers and incomes."

The exact methods used by the Times to arrive at this estimate are not included in the article, but it does say the analysis "was of all birth certificates in the United States since 1985 and nearly all for the five years prior."

Suppose for this problem that the only data source for the cited study was birth certificates, (which do include the mother's age and education level) and that the age of the women giving birth for the first time was 7 years higher for women with college degrees than for those without. Does this study allow you to infer that women who choose to go to college defer childbearing? Explain, naming any potential biases in this study design.