

Teen Pregnancy

www.teenpregnancy.org

How bad is the problem?

- The United States has the highest rates of teen pregnancy and births in the western industrialized world. Teen pregnancy costs the United States at least \$9 billion annually.¹
- Thirty-one percent of young women become pregnant at least once before they reach the age of 20² -- about 750,000 a year.³ Eight in ten of these pregnancies are unintended⁴ and 81 percent are to unmarried teens.
- The teen birth rate has declined slowly but steadily from 1991 to 2005 with a decline of 35 percent for those aged 15 to 19. These recent declines reverse the 23-percent rise in the teenage birth rate from 1986 to 1991. The largest decline since 1991 by race was for black women. The birth rate for black teens aged 15 to 19 fell 48 percent between 1991 to 2006. Hispanic teen birth rates declined 22 percent between 1991 and 2005. The rates of both Hispanics and blacks, however, remain higher than for other groups. Hispanic teens now have the highest teenage birth rates. Most teenagers giving birth before 1980 were married whereas most teens giving birth today are unmarried.⁵ For more detail, including state by state rates, visit <http://www.teenpregnancy.org/resources/data/national.asp>.
- The younger a teenaged girl is when she has sex for the first time, the more likely she is to have had unwanted or non-voluntary sex. Close to four in ten girls who had first intercourse at 13 or 14 report it was either non-voluntary or unwanted.⁶

Who suffers the consequences?

- Teen mothers are less likely to complete high school (only one-third receive a high school diploma) and only 1.5% have a college degree by age 30.⁷ Teen mothers are more likely to end up on welfare (nearly 80 percent of unmarried teen mothers end up on welfare).⁸
- The children of teenage mothers have lower birth weights⁹, are more likely to perform poorly in school¹⁰, and are at greater risk of abuse and neglect.¹¹
- The sons of teen mothers are 13 percent more likely to end up in prison while teen daughters are 22 percent more likely to become teen mothers themselves.¹²

What helps prevent teen pregnancy?

- The primary reason that teenage girls who have never had intercourse give for abstaining from sex is that having sex would be against their religious or moral values. Other reasons cited include desire to avoid pregnancy, fear of contracting a sexually transmitted disease (STD), and not having met the appropriate partner.¹³ Three of four girls and over half of boys report that girls who have sex do so because their boyfriends want them to.¹⁴
- Teenagers who have strong emotional attachments to their parents are much less likely to become sexually active at an early age.¹⁵
- Most people say teens should remain abstinent but should have access to contraception. Ninety-four percent of adults in the United States-and 91 percent of teenagers-think it important that school-aged children and teenagers be given a strong message from society that they should

abstain from sex until they are out of high school. Seventy-eight percent of adults also think that sexually active teenagers should have access to contraception.¹⁶

- Contraceptive use among sexually active teens has increased but remains inconsistent. Three-quarters of teen girls and eight in 10 boys use some method of contraception (usually a condom) the first time they have sex.¹⁷ A sexually active teen who does not use contraception has a 90 percent chance of pregnancy within one year.¹⁸
- Parents rate high among many teens as trustworthy and preferred information sources on birth control. One in two teens say they "trust" their parents most for reliable and complete information about birth control, only 12 percent say a friend.¹⁹
- Teens who have been raised by both parents (biological or adoptive) from birth, have lower probabilities of having sex than teens who grew up in any other family situation. At age 16, 22 percent of girls from intact families and 44 percent of other girls have had sex at least once.²⁰ Similarly, teens from intact, two-parent families are less likely to give birth in their teens than girls from other family backgrounds.²¹

When should I talk to my child about sex?

- Before they make you a grandparent. One of every 3 girls has had sex by age 16, 2 out of 3 by age 18. Two of 3 boys have had sex by age 18.²²
- Surprise: Your teen wants to hear from you. Seven of ten teens interviewed said that they were ready to listen to things parents thought they were not ready to hear.²³ When asked about the reasons why teenage girls have babies, 78 percent of white and 70 percent of African-American teenagers reported that lack of communication between a girl and her parents is often a reason teenage girls have babies.²⁴

Do teens wish they had waited to have sex?

- Yes. A majority of both girls and boys who are sexually active wish they had waited. Eight in ten girls and six in ten boys say they wish they had waited until they were older to have sex.²⁵

Sources

1. Hoffman, Saul, Ph.D. (2006). *By the Numbers: the Public Cost of Teen Childbearing*. Washington, DC: the National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy.
2. National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy analysis of Teen Pregnancy Data. (2006).
3. The Guttmacher Institute. (2006) *U.S. Teenage Pregnancy Statistics National and State Trends and Trends by Race and Ethnicity*. New York: The Guttmacher Institute.
4. Henshaw, S.K. (1998). Unintended Pregnancy in the United States. *Family Planning Perspectives*, 30(1):24-29, 46. Based on data from the 1982, 1988, and 1995 cycles of the National Survey of Family Growth, supplemented by data from other sources.
5. Hamilton BE, Martin JA, Ventura SJ. Births: Preliminary data for 2005. National vital statistics reports; vol 55. Hyattsville, MD: National Center for Health Statistics. Forthcoming.
6. Moore, K.A., & Driscoll, A. (1997). Partners, Predators, Peers, Protectors: Males and Teen Pregnancy. In *Not Just for Girls: The Roles of Boys and Men in Teen Pregnancy* (pp. 5-10). Washington, DC. The National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy.
7. Maynard, R.A., (Ed.). (1996). *Kids Having Kids: A Robin Hood Foundation Special Report on the Costs of Adolescent Childbearing*, New York: Robin Hood Foundation.
8. Calculations based on the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth (1979-1985) in Congressional Budget Office. (1990, September). *Sources of Support for Adolescent Mothers*. Washington, DC: Author.
9. Wolfe, B., & Perozek, M. (1997). Teen Children's Health and Health Care Use. In R.A. Maynard (Ed.), *Kids Having Kids: Economic Costs and Social Consequences of Teen Pregnancy*, (pp. 181-203). Washington, DC: The Urban Institute Press.
10. Maynard, R.A., (Ed.). (1996). *Kids Having Kids: A Robin Hood Foundation Special Report on the Costs of Adolescent Childbearing*, New York: Robin Hood Foundation.
11. George, R.M., & Lee, B.J. (1997). Abuse and Neglect of Children. In R.A. Maynard (Ed.), *Kids Having Kids: Economic Costs and Social Consequences of Teen Pregnancy* (pp. 205-230). Washington, DC: The Urban Institute Press.
12. Maynard, R.A. (Ed.). (1996). *Kids Having Kids: A Robin Hood Foundation Special Report On the Costs of Adolescent Childbearing*. New York: Robin Hood Foundation. See also Haveman, R.H., Wolfe, B., & Peterson, E. (1997). Children of Early Childbearers as Young Adults. In R.A. Maynard (Ed.), *Kids Having Kids: Economic Costs and Social Consequences of Teen Pregnancy* (pp. 257-284). Washington, DC: The Urban Institute Press.
13. Abma, J.C., Martinez, G.M, Mosner, W.D. & Dawson, B.S. (2004). *Teenagers in the United States: Sexual Activity, Contraceptive Use and Childbearing, 2002*. Vital Health Statistics 23 (24).
14. EDK Associates for *Seventeen* magazine and the Ms. Foundation for Women. (1996). *Teenagers Under Pressure*.
15. Blum, R.W., & Rinehart, P.M. (1997). *Reducing the Risk: Connection That Make a Difference in the Lives of Youth*. Minneapolis, MN: Division of General Pediatrics and Adolescent Health, University of Minnesota.
16. National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy. (2003). *With one voice: America's adults and teens sound off about teen pregnancy*. Washington, DC: Author.
17. Abma, J.C., Martinez, G.M, Mosner, W.D. & Dawson, B.S. (2004). *Teenagers in the United States: Sexual Activity, Contraceptive Use and Childbearing, 2002*. Vital Health Statistics 23 (24).
18. Alan Guttmacher Institute. (1994). *Sex and America's Teenagers*. New York and Washington, DC: Author.
19. Princeton Survey Research Associates for the Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation. (1996, June). *The 1996 Kaiser Family Foundation Survey on Teens and Sex: What Teens Today Say They Need to Know, and Who They Listen To*. Menlo Park, CA: Author.

20. Moore, K.A., Driscoll, A.K., & Lindberg, L.D. (1998). *A Statistical Portrait of Adolescent Sex, Contraception, and Childbearing*. Washington, DC: The National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy.
21. Ibid.
22. Ibid.
23. Princeton Survey Research Associates for the Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation. (1996, June). *The 1996 Kaiser Family Foundation Survey on Teens and Sex: What Teens Today Say They Need to Know, and Who They Listen To*. Menlo Park, CA: Author.
24. Princeton Survey Research Associates for the National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy. (1996, September). "A Review of Public Opinion About Teen Pregnancy." Washington, DC: Author.

National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy. (2003). *With one voice: America's adults and teens sound off about teen pregnancy*. Washington, DC: Author.