



Teen Pregnancy Quick Facts

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- I. Contraception**
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- III. Abortion**
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***Disclaimer:** Focus on the Family believes that delaying sexual activity until marriage is **the** standard to protect individuals from the physical, psychological, mental and spiritual consequences of out-of-wedlock sexual behavior. Thus abstinence until marriage education is **the** standard for public school sexuality education.*

I. Contraception

Teens don't know much about contraception.

Among the available contraceptive options of condoms, the pill and withdrawal, fewer than a third of 13-year-olds could identify the most effective contraception method.¹

Teens only use contraception sometimes.

Fewer than 75 percent of teens use contraception (usually condoms) the first time they have sex.²

Half of 12- to 14-year-old girls and two-thirds of 12- to 14-year-old boys said they used contraception the last time they had sex.³ Three-fourths of these used condoms, and most of the rest used ineffective methods such as withdrawal and rhythm.⁴

More than half of teens are too embarrassed to buy condoms or talk about them with a partner, though the number decreases as teens get older.⁵

Half of 14-year-olds incorrectly think it is illegal for teens 15 and younger to buy condoms.⁶

Contraception often fails to prevent pregnancy.

Contraception failure rates for the first year:

No method—85%

Withdrawal—24.8%

Condoms—14.5%

Pill—7.4%

Pill and Condom—1.1%⁷

II. Pregnancy

How many teens get pregnant?

More than one-third of all girls get pregnant at least once by age 20.8

Nearly a million teen girls in the United States become pregnant every year, the highest of all industrialized countries.⁹ Two-thirds of these pregnancies are among 18- to 19-year-olds.¹⁰

The highest pregnancy rates are in California, Texas, New York, Florida and Illinois; the lowest rate is in North Dakota.¹¹

More than 50 percent of teen fathers leave after impregnating their partner.¹²

How do most pregnancies end?

Two-fifths of the pregnancies among 10- to 14-year-olds in 2000 ended in a live birth, two-fifths ended in induced abortion and one-fifth ended in a fetal loss.¹³

Declining pregnancy rate.

Pregnancy rates among 15- to 17-year-olds declined by one-third in the past decade.¹⁴

Fifty-three percent of the decline in the pregnancy rate in the past decade is due to reduced sexual activity, and 47 percent is due to increased contraception use.¹⁵

Pregnancy rates among teens were relatively stable from 1976 until 1986 and then increased from 1986 to 1990.¹⁶

Because most girls age 14 and younger have not had sex, their *overall* pregnancy rate is low (1 percent versus the 15 percent for 18- to 19-year-old girls), but one in seven sexually active 14-year-old girls becomes pregnant.¹⁷

Decreasing birth rate.

The birth rate among 10- to 14-year-olds has decreased by half in the past decade.¹⁸

The birth rate among 15- to 17-year-old teens has decreased by a third in the past decade.¹⁹

Birth rates among teens aged 15 to 17 years have generally declined since 1960; a notable exception was a 27 percent increase from 1986 to 1991.²⁰

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The decrease in the teen birth rate accounts for 26 percent of the reduction in the number of children living in poverty in the past decade.²¹

The states with the highest teen birth rates are Mississippi and Texas.²² New Hampshire, Vermont, Massachusetts, North Dakota and Maine have the lowest rates.²³

Health risks for young mothers and their babies.

Mothers 14 years old and younger are more likely to have inadequate weight gain. Inadequate weight gain during pregnancy is associated with low birth-weight, a major risk factor for infant mortality.²⁴

Ten- to 14-year-old mothers are more likely than older mothers to be anemic.²⁵

Teen mothers are 40 percent more likely to have pregnancy-associated hypertension than 20- and 30-year-old mothers.²⁶

Infants with young teen mothers are at the highest risk of infant mortality.²⁷

III. Abortion

Abortion rates for teens rose during the 1970s, were relatively stable in the 1980s, and have declined since 1988.²⁸

There were 24 abortions per 1,000 women ages 15 to 19 in the year 2000. The proportion of teenage pregnancies ending in abortion declined from 46 percent in 1986 to 33 percent in 2000.²⁹

The states with the highest abortion rates in the year 2000 are New Jersey, New York, Maryland, California and Nevada.³⁰ The states with the lowest rates are Utah, South Dakota, Kentucky and North Dakota. In New Jersey, 60 percent of teen pregnancies in the year 2000 ended in abortion.³¹ In New York, Massachusetts and the District of Columbia, at least 50 percent ended in abortion.³²

IV. Motherhood

Teen childbearing costs taxpayers \$6.9 billion a year. The social cost is just under \$9 billion a year.³³

Teen mothers

Teen girls are three times as likely as teen boys to raise a child.³⁴

Nearly three out of four teen mothers drop out of high school. They typically earn \$5,600 a year (less than half the poverty level) for the first 13 years of parenthood.³⁵

Fewer than half will marry in the next 10 years.³⁶

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Taxpayers pay \$1.5 billion more a year in health-services than they would if girls age 17 and younger had delayed motherhood.³⁷

Children of teen mothers

Children of teen mothers are more than twice as likely as the offspring of 20- to 21-year-old mothers to be victims of abuse and neglect.³⁸

These children are 50 percent more likely to repeat a grade, and only 77 percent earn their high school diplomas by early adulthood.³⁹

These teen sons are nearly three times more likely to go to prison than the sons of non-teen mothers and cost taxpayers \$1 billion a year to build and maintain prisons.⁴⁰

By age 24, 30 percent of the children born to teen mothers are neither in school, nor working, nor looking for a job.⁴¹

¹ Albert, B., Brown, S., & Flanigan, C. (Eds.) (2003). *14 and Younger: The Sexual Behavior of Young Adolescents (Summary)*. Washington, DC: National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy, pg. 15.

² Albert, B., Brown, S., & Flanigan, C. (Eds.) (2003). *14 and Younger: The Sexual Behavior of Young Adolescents (Summary)*. Washington, DC: National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy, pg. 7.

³ Albert, B., Brown, S., & Flanigan, C. (Eds.) (2003). *14 and Younger: The Sexual Behavior of Young Adolescents (Summary)*. Washington, DC: National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy, pg. 7.

⁴ Albert, B., Brown, S., & Flanigan, C. (Eds.) (2003). *14 and Younger: The Sexual Behavior of Young Adolescents (Summary)*. Washington, DC: National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy, pg. 7.

⁵ Albert, B., Brown, S., & Flanigan, C. (Eds.) (2003). *14 and Younger: The Sexual Behavior of Young Adolescents (Summary)*. Washington, DC: National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy, pg. 10.

⁶ Albert, B., Brown, S., & Flanigan, C. (Eds.) (2003). *14 and Younger: The Sexual Behavior of Young Adolescents (Summary)*. Washington, DC: National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy, pg. 10.

⁷ John S Santelli, Joyce Abma et al. "Can changes in sexual behaviors among high school students explain the decline in teen pregnancy rates in the 1990s?" *Journal of Adolescent Health*, Vol. 35, Is 2, pg. 80-90 (August 2004).

⁸ "What If: How Declines in Teen Births Have Reduced Poverty and Increased Child Well-Being," *The National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy*, April 2004, Summary of report released by the U.S. Congress' Ways and Means Committee (Democrats).

⁹ Maynard, RA, ed. "Kids Having Kids:A Robin Hood Foundation Special Report on the Costs of Adolescent Childbearing," *Robin Hood Foundation*, 1997, pg. 1; Singh S, Darroch JE. "Trends in sexual activity among adolescent American women: 1982–1995." *Fam Plann Perspect*. 1999;31 :212 –219; "Healthy Youth: An Investment in Our Nation's Future 2004," CDC; Ventura SJ, Abma JC, Mosher WD, Henshaw S. "Revised pregnancy rates, 1990–97, and new rates for 1998–99: United States." *Natl Vital Stat Rep* 2003;52(7):1–16.

¹⁰ "U.S. Teenage Pregnancy Statistics: Overall Trends by Race and Ethnicity and State-by-State Information," The Alan Guttmacher Institute, February 19, 2004, pg. 3.

¹¹ "U.S. Teenage Pregnancy Statistics: Overall Trends by Race and Ethnicity and State-by-State Information," The Alan Guttmacher Institute, February 19, 2004, pg. 2-3.

¹² "Sexual and Reproductive Health: Women and Men," The Alan Guttmacher Institute, September 2002.

¹³ Ventura SJ, Abma JC, Mosher WD, Henshaw S. "Estimated pregnancy rates for the United States, 1990–2000: An Update." *National Vital Statistics Reports* vol 52 no 4. (Hyattsville, Maryland: National Center for Health Statistics, 2004).

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¹⁵ John S Santelli, Joyce Abma et al., "Can changes in sexual behaviors among high school students explain the decline in teen pregnancy rates in the 1990s?" *Journal of Adolescent Health*, Vol. 35, Is 2, pg. 80-90 (August 2004).

¹⁶ Ventura SJ, Matthews TJ, Hamilton BE. "Births to teenagers in the United States, 1940–2000." *Natl Vital Stat Rep*. 2001;49(10):1-23; Ventura SJ, Mosher WD, Curtin SC, et al. "Trends in pregnancies and pregnancy rates by outcome: Estimates for the United States, 1976–96." *Vital Health Stat*. 2000;21(56):1-47.

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- ²³ "U.S. Teenage Pregnancy Statistics: Overall Trends by Race and Ethnicity and State-by-State Information," The Alan Guttmacher Institute, February 19, 2004, pg. 2.
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⁴¹ Maynard, RA, ed. "Kids Having Kids: A Robin Hood Foundation Special Report on the Costs of Adolescent Childbearing," *Robin Hood Foundation*, 1997, pg. 10.