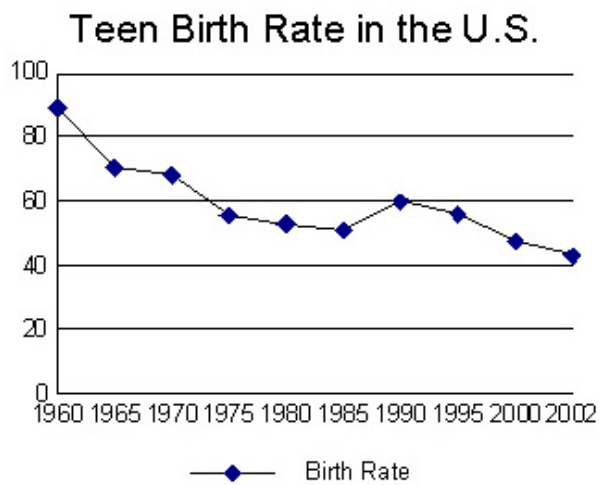


## Adolescent Pregnancy and Childbearing in the U.S.

- The 2000 teen pregnancy rate (the number of pregnancies per 1,000 women aged 15-19) decreased to 84 in 1999, the lowest level since 1975. Still, each year nearly a million teenage women become pregnant in the U.S. One in ten American teenage women become pregnant before the age of 20.



Source: National Center for Health Statistics

- In 2002 the birth rate for women 15-19 dropped to 43 births per 1,000 women from 60 in 1990. The abortion rate also decreased. A third of teenage pregnancies ended in abortion in 2000, down from the 1990 rate of 40 percent. Fewer than 10 percent of teenagers who delivered babies in 1995 chose adoption.
- The teen birth rate declined significantly between 1960 and 1986, but large increases in the latter half of the 1980s resulted in birth rates that were higher than the previous decade. The teen birth rate has since declined to 43 live births per 1,000 teenage women nationally in 2002, including declines in every state. The teen birth rates varied by geographic region, with the highest rates centered in the Southern and Southwestern United States.
- The majority of teen births occur to teens aged 18-19. In 2000, the birth rate for girls aged 15 to 17 was 27.4 percent whereas the birth rate for women aged 18-19 was 79, regardless of race.
- Studies show that the teens who may be least able to financially support a child, are more likely to become teen parents. While teen pregnancy crosscuts all income levels, 85 percent of teens who give birth are poor or near-poor. Teen mothers have more children, on average, than women who delay childbearing, which makes it more difficult for them and their children to escape a life of poverty. In addition to poverty, other indicators which consistently predict teen childbearing are family dysfunction, early behavior problems and poor performance in school.
- According to a 1998 survey, 30 percent of births to women between the ages of 15 and 49 are unintended. The percentage of unintended births to women between the ages of 15 and 19 is much higher at 78 percent.

### Sexual Activity

- In 1997, 22 percent of men aged 14 and younger and 17 percent of girls aged 14 and younger reported having had sex at least once.

- Fifty percent of women aged 15-19 and 55 percent of men aged 15-19 have had intercourse, according to a 1995 survey, compared to 35 percent and 55 percent respectively in the mid-1960s. In 1995, 22 percent of 15-year-old women reported having had intercourse.

#### Reasons for Recent Declines in Teen Pregnancy

- ◇ Greater emphasis on delaying sexual activity
- ◇ More responsible attitudes among teenagers about casual sex and out-of-wedlock childbearing
- ◇ Increased fear of sexually transmitted diseases, especially Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS)
- ◇ Growing popularity of long-lasting contraceptive methods, such as the implant (Norplant) and the injectable (Depo-Provera) options, and possibly more correct use of other contraceptive methods

Source: The Annie E. Casey Foundation

- The younger teens initiate sexual activity, the higher the probability that they will have more lifetime sexual partners. Those who are younger at first intercourse (15-17) acquire more partners more quickly in the first few years of sexual activity than older teens who initiate sex actively between 18-19.
- Teens who begin having sex at an earlier age are more likely to have experienced coercive sex. For women who were under 15 at first intercourse, 13 percent reported that their first intercourse was not voluntary. A 2002 public opinion poll found that 81 percent of sexually experienced youth aged 12-14 wished that they had waited longer to have sex, compared with 55 percent of sexually experienced 15-19 year olds.

### Contraception

- While teens today are initiating sex at younger ages and have more partners than in the past, they are also more likely to use contraception, especially condoms. In 1995, 78 percent of teen girls used contraception at first intercourse as compared to 65 percent in 1988 and 48 percent in 1982.
- While the pill was the most popular form of contraception among female contraceptive users aged 15-19, it dropped from being the first choice among females, decreasing from 64 percent in 1982 to 44 percent in 1995. Forty-four percent of female teenage contraceptive users chose condoms in 1990, up from 21 percent in 1982. The condom is the method most commonly chosen at first sexual intercourse with 70 percent of both females and males reportedly using this method in 1995.
- In 1995, 25 percent of adolescent women in the United States report no use of contraception at first sex. If they do use contraceptives, they are most likely to use condoms. 40 percent reported using condoms at first intercourse, 8 percent used the pill at first intercourse, and 7 percent reported using other methods, such as withdrawal.

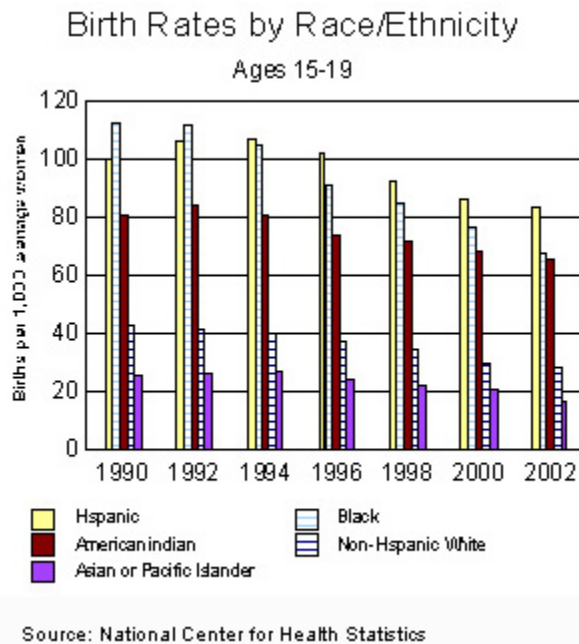
### Abstinence

- In the last decade, teenagers across the United States have participated in formal and informal virginity pledge movements in which teens pledge virginity until marriage. Recent studies have shown that this movement has been successful in delaying the onset of intercourse among the pledgers. Unfortunately, research has also shown that of these pledgers who do

eventually initiate sex, many are much less prepared or likely to use contraceptives, leading to unintended pregnancy and higher rates of STDs among these teens.

### Ethnic and Racial Comparisons

- The largest decline in teen birth rates has been among black teens. Since 1991 the black teen birth rate has decreased by nearly 40 percent from 118 to 68 in 2002, the lowest ever recorded. Since 1991, the teen birth rate for Hispanics decreased by 21 percent in an eleven year period, from 105 to 83 in 2002. The teen birth rates for both black and Hispanic girls are much higher than the rates for non-Hispanic white teens which decreased from 43 to 29 from 1991 to 2002.



- In 2002, about 43 percent of mothers ages 15-19 were white, 24 percent were black, 31 percent were Hispanic, and 2 percent were from other racial or other ethnic groups.

- The percent of births to teens that were unintended varies significantly by race. In the 1990s, 67 percent of white teenage mothers who gave birth reported that the birth was unintended, 75 percent of black teens reported that it was unintended, and only 46 percent of Hispanic teens reported that it was unintended.

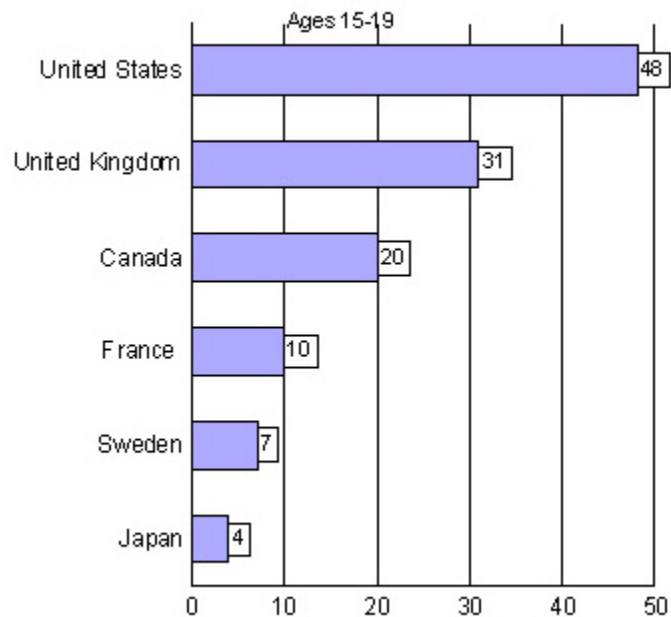
### Unmarried Births to Teens

- As the social stigma of unmarried motherhood has lessened in recent decades, pregnant teens have become less likely to get married before giving birth. Furthermore, earlier age at first sex and an increasing age at first marriage has led to pregnant teens being less likely to get married before giving birth.
- As the teen birth rate has been declining, the unmarried teen birth rate has been increasing. In 2002, 82 percent of teen births occurred to unmarried females, whereas in 1960 only 15 percent of teen births were to unmarried teens. However, teens account for only 25 percent of all out-of-wedlock births.
- Unmarried teen births differed greatly by race. In 2002, 96 percent of black teens who gave birth were unmarried whereas 75 percent of births to white teens and 74 percent of births to Hispanic teens were unmarried. The largest increases in out-of-wedlock births have been among white teens.

## International Comparison

- Teen pregnancy, birth and abortion rates in the U.S. are the highest in the industrialized world. Unlike the U.S., teen birth rates have fallen dramatically in much of Western Europe, where effective contraceptive use is higher.
- Even those states in the U.S. with low teen birth rates have higher rates than found in most other industrialized nations. The state with the lowest teen birth rate in 2002 was New Hampshire, with a rate of 20 births per 1,000 women aged 15-19. Texas on the other hand, had a teen birth rate of 64 in 2002.

**Teen Birth Rates for Selected Countries, 2000**



Source: Population Action International

## The Costs of Teen Births

- More than 80 percent of young teen mothers receive welfare during the 10 years following the birth of their first child, 44 percent of them for more than 5 years—at a cost of \$7 billion per year – and more than 75 percent of all unmarried teen mothers received welfare within five years of giving birth to their first child. Data for 1995 show that 69 percent of births to teens in a five-year period were paid for by Medicaid or other government sources.
- Adolescent childbearing has also been associated with reduced educational attainment and employment opportunities. In 2002, only 40 percent of all teenage mothers finished high school, compared with 94 percent of those who did not give birth.
- When compared to children born to women aged 20 and older, babies born to mothers aged 15-17 have poorer health, lower cognitive development, reduced educational attainments, and higher rates of behavior problems.
- The personal impact of teenage childbearing is twofold, diminishing opportunities for both the child and the mother. In addition, the children of adolescent parents are more likely to become adolescent parents themselves and are, thus, more likely to perpetuate the cycle.

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This executive summary was prepared by Jennifer Cushman of the Population Resource Center in 1999, reviewed by Barbara W. Sugland, Sc.D., Senior Research Associate of Child Trends, Inc., updated by Megan McNamara in 2004. Sources include: General Accounting Office, [Teen Mothers: Selected Socio-Demographic Characteristics and Risk Factors](#); Child Trends, Inc., [Facts at a Glance](#); National Center for Health Statistics, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, [Declines in Teenage Birth Rates, 1991-98: National and State Patterns](#); Alan Guttmacher Institute, [Facts in Brief, Falling Teen Pregnancy, Birthrates: What's Behind the Declines?](#), [Sharing Responsibility: Women, Society & Abortion Worldwide](#), Teen Sex and Pregnancy; The Annie E. Casey Foundation, [When Teens](#)

Have Sex: Issues and Trends, The National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy, National Vital Statistics Reports; For more information, contact the Population Resource Center at (202)467-5030, 1725 K Street, NW, Suite 1102, Washington, D.C., 20006; or (609)452-2822, 15 Roszel Road, Princeton, NJ, 08540.