

## **Statistics on Teen Pregnancy**

### **How many teen girls in the U.S. get pregnant each year?**

Nearly one million teen girls get pregnant each year. Nearly four out of 10 young women get pregnant at least once before they turn 20.<sup>1</sup> Each year the federal government alone spends about \$40 billion to help families that began with a teenage birth.<sup>2</sup>

### **But aren't the teen pregnancy and birth rates declining?**

Yes, but they are still too high. The overall U.S. teenage pregnancy rate declined 19 percent in 1997 from its all time high in 1991 (the most recent year available), from 117 pregnancies per 1,000 women aged 15-19 to 94.3 per 1,000.<sup>3</sup> The national teen birth rate declined 5 percent between 1998 and 2000, reaching a rate of 48.5 births per 1,000 women ages 15-19 - the lowest rate ever recorded. Since 1991, the teen birth rate has declined 22 percent.<sup>4</sup>

### **Does the U.S. have a higher teen pregnancy rate than other countries?**

Yes, by a long shot. Although rates here are declining, the U.S. has the highest rates of teen pregnancy, birth, and abortion in the industrialized world. In fact, the U.S. teen pregnancy and birth rates are nearly double Canada's, at least four times those of France and Germany, and more than eight times that of Japan.<sup>5</sup>

### **Isn't everyone having sex?**

No. Fewer than one-half of high-school students have had sex.<sup>6</sup>

### **So, does that mean more kids think it's "cool" to be a virgin?**

Teens are showing signs of being more conservative sexually. Close to six in ten teens (58 percent) surveyed recently said sexual activity for high school-age teens is not acceptable, even if precautions are taken against pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases.<sup>7</sup> In fact, the vast majority of teens (87 percent) surveyed said they do not think it is embarrassing for teens to admit they are virgins.<sup>8</sup>

### **Do teens have a general opinion about whether their peers should be sexually active?**

In a recent poll, nearly eight of ten teens surveyed (78 percent) agreed that teens should not be sexually active. However, the majority of teens (54 percent) said teens who are sexually active should have access to birth control.<sup>9</sup>

### **Are younger teen girls more sexually active than they used to be?**

While teen sexual activity is down among most teens, it has risen among girls younger than 15.<sup>10</sup> In 1995 (the most recent year for which data is available) almost one-fifth (19

percent) of teen girls reported they had sex before age 15.<sup>11</sup> And, the younger teen girls are when they first have sex, the more likely they are to report that sex was unwanted or non-voluntary.<sup>12</sup>

### **Are teen guys more sexually active than they were in the past?**

The percentage of unmarried teen guys aged 17-19 that reported having sex dropped from 75.5 percent in 1988 to 68.2 percent in 1995.<sup>13</sup>

### **Do teens who have had sex wish they had waited?**

Most do. In a recent poll, 63 percent of teens who have had sexual intercourse said they wish they had waited. More than one-half of teen boys (55 percent) and nearly three of four teen girls (72 percent) surveyed said they wish they had waited longer to have sex.<sup>14</sup> Sixty-four percent of teens also said the advice they'd give a younger sibling or friend would be: "Don't have sex until you're at least out of high school, but, if you do, be sure to protect yourself against pregnancy and STDs."<sup>15</sup>

### **Can you get pregnant if you use birth control?**

Yes. Even if used perfectly, all methods of birth control have a failure rate, ranging from 0.05 percent for Norplant to 9 percent for the sponge and calendar rhythm.<sup>16</sup> The only way to make 100-percent sure that you won't get pregnant or get someone pregnant is to not have sex. The next best thing is to use birth control correctly every time you have sex. Many sexually-active teens don't use protection at all or use it inconsistently or incorrectly.

### **Are sexually active teens using birth control?**

More teens are now using contraception the first time they have sex, but are less likely than in previous years to use contraception the most recent time they've had sex.<sup>17</sup> Moreover, thirty-one percent of girls were completely unprotected the last time they had sex, and one-third of sexually active teens who do use contraception use it inconsistently.<sup>18</sup>

### **Why don't teens use birth control every time?**

In a recent poll, teen boys (49.3 percent) and teen girls (54.2 percent) agree that pressure from their partners is one of the main reasons teens fail to use birth control.<sup>19</sup> Alcohol and drugs can also play a role. Many young women say that they used alcohol - or were even drunk - when they first had sex. And many of these same young women say that they were so drunk that they were unable to use birth control (especially condoms) properly at the time. In one study of unplanned pregnancies in 14-21 year olds, 1/3 of the girls who had gotten pregnant had been drinking when they had sex; 91% of them reported that the sex was unplanned.<sup>20</sup>

### **You can't get pregnant the first time, right?**

Wrong. Teen girls can get pregnant the first time they have sex, and every time after that. A couple that doesn't use birth control has an 85 percent chance of pregnancy within one year.<sup>21</sup>

### **Do most teens who choose to raise the child get married when they find out they're pregnant?**

In 1960, only 15 percent of teen births were to unmarried teens.<sup>22</sup> In 2000, 79 percent of teen births were to unmarried teens.<sup>23</sup>

### **Aren't there a lot of teen girls who want to get pregnant?**

The majority of pregnancies to 15- to 19-year-olds - 78 percent - are not planned.<sup>24</sup>

### **Do the teen girls who get pregnant keep their babies?**

Just over one-half of all pregnancies to teens aged 19 or younger end in births.<sup>25</sup> Thirty percent of teen pregnancies end in abortion and 14 percent end in miscarriage.<sup>26</sup> Of those teens that give birth, most keep their children. According to a 1995 survey, only 1 percent of all single women choose adoption.<sup>27</sup>

### **What happens to teen mothers?**

Less than one-third of teen mothers complete high school.<sup>28</sup> Many teen mothers go on to have more children - about one-fourth of teen mothers have a second child within 24 months of the first birth.<sup>29</sup> A 1990 study shows that almost one-third of all teen mothers and one-half of unmarried teen mothers go on welfare within the first year of the birth of their first child. Within five years after the birth of their first child, almost one-half of all teen mothers and over three-quarters of unmarried teen mothers began receiving welfare.<sup>30</sup>

### **What happens to the children of teen moms?**

Children of teen mothers are more likely to be born prematurely and at low birth weight, which raises the chances of blindness, deafness, mental retardation, cerebral palsy, and other disabilities.<sup>31</sup> Children of teen mothers are 50 percent more likely to repeat a grade. They also perform much worse on standardized tests and ultimately they are less likely to complete high school than children of mothers who waited to have a baby.<sup>32</sup> The daughters of teen mothers are 22 percent more likely to become teen mothers themselves. The sons of teen mothers are 13 percent more likely to end up in prison.<sup>30</sup>

### **Who are the fathers, and where are they now?**

Nearly 40 percent of the fathers of children born to teen mothers are age 20 or older.

Only 20 percent of the fathers marry the teen mothers of their first children. On average, the remaining 80 percent pay less than \$800 annually for child support.<sup>34</sup>

### **Where can I find out about teen pregnancy rates in my state?**

Check out this link: [www.teenpregnancy.org/america/states/](http://www.teenpregnancy.org/america/states/)

You'll find all kinds of interesting information about your state, including teen pregnancy and birth rates, changes in pregnancy and birth rates over the past several years, and racial and ethnic breakdowns of the numbers.

#### Facts & Statistics - Endnotes

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