

NCHS Data on Teenage Pregnancy

About NCHS

The CDC's National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS) is the nation's principal health statistics agency, providing data to identify and address health issues. NCHS compiles statistical information to help guide public health and health policy decisions.

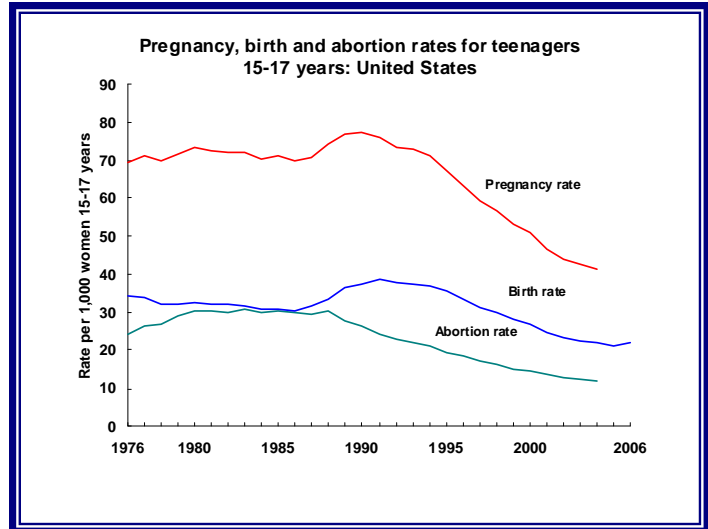
Collaborating with other public and private health partners, NCHS employs a variety of data collection mechanisms to obtain accurate information from multiple sources. This process provides a broad perspective to help us understand the population's health, influences on health, and health outcomes.

Overview

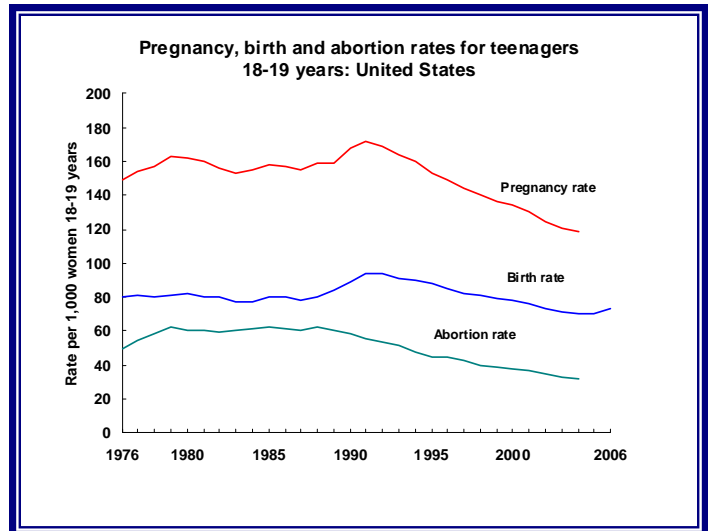
Teenage pregnancy rates dropped 38 percent overall from 1990-2004. The rate fell from its historic peak in 1990, 116.8 per 1,000 aged 15-19 years, to 72.2 in 2004. The 2004 pregnancy rate for teenagers was the lowest ever reported since the national series of estimates began in 1976.

Trends in Teen Pregnancy by Age

The declines in teenage pregnancy have been much steeper for younger than for older teenagers. The rate for teenagers 15-17 years dropped steeply, by 46 percent from 77.1 per 1,000 in 1990 to 41.5 in 2004. The rate for older teenagers fell as well, by 29 percent beginning in 1991, from 167.7 to 118.6. The 2004 rates for each of these age groups were also lower than for any year during the 1976 -2004 period.

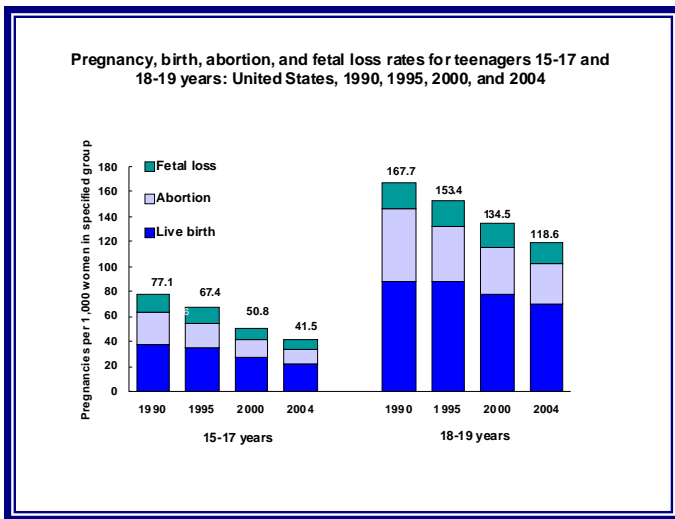


Sources: Estimated pregnancy rates by outcome for the United States, 1990-2004. National Vital Statistics Reports; vol 56 no 15. 2008. Births: Preliminary Data for 2006. National Vital Statistics Reports, vol 56, no. 7. 2007.



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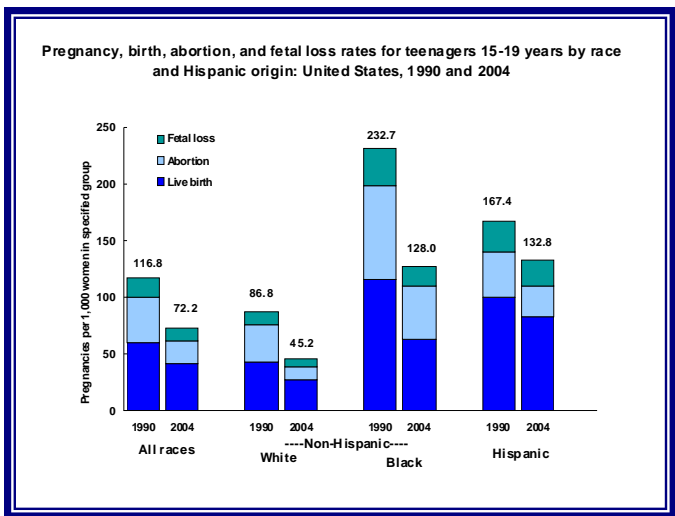
Changes in Pregnancy Rates by Outcome



Source: Estimated pregnancy rates by outcome for the United States, 1990-2004. National Vital Statistics Reports, vol 56, no. 15. 2008.

All components of the pregnancy rates for teenagers (births, abortions, and fetal losses) declined from 1990 through 2004. Teenage birth rates fell one-third from the 1991 peak (61.8 per 1,000) through 2004, and continued to decline through 2005 (by 35 percent to 40.5). The birth rate increased 3 percent between 2005 and 2006 (41.9), interrupting the long-term decline. Abortion rates for teenagers dropped by one-half from 40.3 to 19.8 per 1,000.

Birth and abortion rates fell for non-Hispanic white and black teenagers and for Hispanic teenagers through 2004. The declines in birth and abortion rates during 1990-2004 were 37 and 65 percent, respectively, for white teenagers; 46 percent and 43 percent for black teenagers; and 18 percent and 31 percent for Hispanic teenagers. After generally continuing to decline through 2005, birth rates for each population subgroup increased in 2006.



Source: Estimated pregnancy rates by outcome for the United States, 1990-2004. National Vital Statistics Reports, vol 56, no. 15. 2008.

Factors Accounting for the Recent Decline in Teen Pregnancy

NCHS' 2002 National Survey of Family Growth (NSFG) shows trends in behaviors underlying the reductions in U.S. teenage pregnancy rates through the early 2000s. During 1995 to 2002, the percent of female teens who had ever had intercourse declined significantly (among ages 15-17) or was stable (among ages 18-19). During the same time period, the percent who used contraception at last sex rose from 71 to 83 percent. According to recent data on high school students from CDC's Youth Risk Behavior Survey (2007), increases in contraceptive use and decreases in sexual activity stopped after 2001. These may be among the factors accounting for the upturn in teenage birth rates in 2006. Findings from Cycle 7 of the NSFG (available in late 2009) are expected to help explain the most recent trends and variations in pregnancy rates and the behavioral, social, and economic factors that account for them.

Rates by Race and Hispanic Origin

Pregnancy rates dropped for teenagers in all population subgroups between 1990 and 2004. Overall, pregnancy rates for black and white non-Hispanic teenagers declined 45 and 48 percent, respectively, with much larger declines for younger than for older teenagers. The rates for Hispanic teenagers began to decline after 1992; the overall teen pregnancy rate for this group fell about 24 percent during 1992-2004.

Teenage Pregnancy Data Sources

NCHS and its partners employ a variety of data collection mechanisms to obtain accurate information from multiple sources. They include:

- **National Vital Statistics System** – Collects information from birth certificates in all 50 states and the District of Columbia, including detailed age and race/ethnicity characteristics. Because all births are part of this database, it provides the detail needed for monitoring annual change in teenage pregnancy and for research on disparities. (<http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/births.htm>)
- **National Survey of Family Growth (NSFG)** – The Nation’s leading source of reliable national data on topics related to birth and pregnancy histories, sexual activity, contraception and fertility, HIV risk behaviors, and marriage, divorce, and cohabitation. The NSFG is conducted through confidential personal interviews. Pregnancy history data from the NSFG are the source of information on fetal loss that is incorporated in the teen pregnancy rates. The NSFG also provides critical information on behavioral and social patterns that may affect teen sexual behavior. (<http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/nsfg.htm>)
- **CDC’s Abortion Surveillance System** – CDC’s National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion (NCCDPHP) collects summary data on abortions from most State health departments. Information is collected on several patient characteristics, including age, race, Hispanic origin, and marital status. (<http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/PDF/ss/ss5609.pdf>)
- **The Guttmacher Institute** – The Guttmacher Institute compiles national totals of abortions from their surveys of all known abortion providers. The Guttmacher Institute’s national totals are distributed by patient characteristics (i.e., age, race, Hispanic origin, marital status) according to CDC/NCCDPHP’s tabulations. (<http://www.guttmacher.org/sections/abortion.php>)
- **CDC’s Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System (YRBSS)** – CDC’s NCCDPHP monitors priority health-risk behaviors among youth and young adults through its YRBSS. The YRBSS includes a national school-based survey conducted by state, territorial, and local education and health agencies and tribal governments. (<http://www.cdc.gov/HealthyYouth/yrbs/index.htm>)

Challenges and Future Opportunities in Monitoring Teen Pregnancy

- Measuring and tracking teenage pregnancy is challenging because of the need to aggregate data from three independent data sources: birth data, summary data on induced abortion, and fetal losses.
- Now that the NSFG is being conducted continuously (since mid 2006), we will be able to update the estimates of fetal loss on a more regular and frequent basis. Continuous interviewing will also make it possible to track changes in behavioral and social patterns that may affect teen sexual behavior on a more timely basis. Data from the first 30 months of continuous data collection in cycle 7 are expected to be available in late 2009.