Teen Pregnancy

Basic Stats

- Each year, 10% of all women aged 15-19 become pregnant.
- Every year, 1 in 5 women aged 15-19 who have had sex become pregnant.
- 78% of teen pregnancies are unintended.
- Teen pregnancies account for about 1/4 of all accidental pregnancies annually.
- 13% of all U.S. births are to teens.
- Steep decreases in the pregnancy rate among teens in the early-to-mid 1990s was from decreased sexual activity and more effective contraceptive practices.

Source: "Teen Sex and Pregnancy," Facts in Brief, AGI, 1999

- Teenagers in both age-groups had high pregnancy rates in 1996, but the rate among women aged 18-19 (153 pregnancies per 1,000 women) was 2.5 times that among 15-17-year-olds (62 per 1,000). Most of the difference reflects that a lower proportion of younger teenagers than of 18-19-year-olds have ever had intercourse (39% vs. 71%).


- Teen pregnancy rates are much higher in the United States than in many other developed countries--twice as high as in England and Wales or Canada, and nine times as high as in the Netherlands or Japan.

Source: Alan Guttmacher Institute "Teen Sex and Pregnancy" Ibid http://agi-usa.org/pubs/1

- Teenage pregnancy remains a significant health and social problem in the United States despite decreases in incidence over the past decade. Almost a million teenagers become pregnant each year, resulting in almost 500,000 births, 125,000 miscarriages and 264,000 abortions


- High fertility and low rates of contraceptive use put sexually active adolescent females at high risk for pregnancy. A sexually active teen who does not use contraception has a 90% chance of becoming pregnant within 1 year


- A study of 7000 females found that girls aged 15 to 19 were more likely than older women to use contraception intermittently (18%–21% vs 2%–9%) or not at
all (5%–8% vs 2%–4%). Teens also have been shown to use less effective methods of contraception, such as withdrawal and spermicides


• Increased use of contraception accounts for 75% of the decline in teen pregnancy rates, but many teens do not use contraception consistently and correctly. More than 30% of adolescents do not use any contraception the first time they have intercourse.


**Teen Fathers**

• The majority of boyfriends leave when their girlfriend has a baby. 78% of births to teens occur outside of marriage.
• The fathers of babies born to teenage mothers are likely to be older than the women.
• About 1 in 5 infants born to unmarried minors are fathered by men 5 or more years older than the mother.

Source: "Teen Sex and Pregnancy," Facts in Brief, AGI, 1999

• The least amount of father involvement in U.S. society has been observed in two groups of fathers: poor, unmarried teenage fathers and upper-class fathers in traditional nuclear families. Teen dads in U.S. society are often undereducated and underemployed. Therefore, they cannot make a meaningful contribution to the economic security of their children. Poor teen fathers do not have meaningful benefits to offer their child's mother. As the reciprocity hypothesis would predict, these fathers are often minimally involved in the lives of their children.


**Teens simply not ready?**

• Although an adolescent girl's body may be ready for reproductive activity in a functional sense, there can be a marked delay in the incorporation of physical changes into her psychological and emotional awareness. An increasing number of young people are confronted by sexual feelings and opportunities for sexual experimentation for which they are not cognitively or psychosocially prepared; this lack of preparation increases the vulnerability of American teenagers to the harmful consequences of early sexual experimentation, pregnancy, and sexually transmitted disease.
External influences make up an important factor contributing to early onset of sexual behavior among adolescents and to teenage pregnancy. The suggestive and persuasive nature of television, magazines, films, videos, and the actions of older children or siblings in the immediate environment cannot be overstated. Teenagers can "become fertile long before they understand their own bodies, and this may increase in them a physical awareness of sexuality long before emotional maturity has had time to develop".


Health Considerations

- Although many teen pregnancies result in poor health for both mother and baby, good nutrition and prenatal care results in better pregnancy outcomes than those of older women.

Source: Hatcher et al, Contraceptive Technology, 1994

Abortions on the Decline

- In the USA the abortion rate among teenagers declined substantially from 40.6 per 1 000 women aged 15-19 years in 1990 to 29.2 in 1996