

ARKANSAS: TEEN PREGNANCY

February 2014



JUST THE FACTS

Teen pregnancy and childbearing are closely linked to various economic and social issues, such as education, income and poverty, child wellbeing and health. Adolescent childbearing also carries considerable public costs. Teen mothers are less likely to finish high school than women who delay pregnancy and parenthood. Close to half of teen mothers ages 15 through 19 have income below the poverty line and nearly two thirds depend on public assistance within the first year of their child's life. Children of teen mothers are more likely to suffer health and cognitive disadvantages, come in contact with the child welfare and correctional systems, live in poverty, drop out of high school and become teen parents themselves. While states have experienced significant declines in recent years, teen pregnancy and birth rates in the United States remain among the highest in the industrialized world. Nationwide, nearly three in 10 teens will become pregnant at least once by age 20. One in five births to girls ages 15 to 19 is not the teen's first.

Disparities Exist

A closer look at births to teenagers in Arkansas finds that the majority are to older teens (18- and 19-year-olds). The rate among older teens is nearly four times higher than that among younger

teens—82 per 1,000 girls, compared to 21 among 15 to 17-year-olds. Birth rates vary significantly by race and ethnicity, too. The birth rate among black teens is more than 1.5 times higher than that of non-Hispanic white teens—63 per 1,000 girls, compared to 40. The birth rate among Hispanic/Latino teens is also higher than their non-Hispanic white peers, at 53 per 1,000 girls.

Geographic variations in Arkansas teen birth rates largely appear to follow national trends. A recent study by the National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy found that while higher numbers of teen births occur in major urban areas, rural regions generally see higher teen birth rates. In fact, the study shows that as the level of urbanization increases, the teen birth rate decreases.

For More Information

State and local agencies and others are working to reduce teen pregnancy in Arkansas, and federal funding is also available for teen pregnancy prevention activities. See NCSL's other fact sheets for additional information on how teen pregnancy relates to various issues, as well as policy options for the state to consider, available at <http://www.ncsl.org/default.aspx?tabid=27812>

- Teen Pregnancy: Impact on Education and the Economy
- Teen Pregnancy in Arkansas: Connection to Child Welfare and Juvenile Justice
- Teen Pregnancy in Arkansas: State Policy Options

The 115,652 children born to teens in Arkansas between 1991 and 2008 **cost taxpayers approximately \$3 billion** over that period. During the same period, the state teen birth rate **declined 23 percent, saving taxpayers an estimated \$72 million** in 2008 alone.

Source: Counting it Up: The Public Costs of Teen Childbearing in Arkansas in 2008, The National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy

Resources

Teen Pregnancy Prevention, National Conference of State Legislatures; <http://www.ncsl.org/default.aspx?tabid=23141>

The National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy
www.thenationalcampaign.org

\$143 million

The public cost of teen childbearing in Arkansas in 2008.

This includes the following costs associated with the children of teen parents:

- **\$34 million** for public health care (Medicaid and CHIP)
- **\$11 million** for child welfare
- **\$21 million** for higher rates of incarceration
- **\$45 million** in lost tax revenue due to lower earnings and spending

In 2008, teen childbearing in Arkansas cost taxpayers at least \$143 million. Fifty-one percent of these costs were paid for by Arkansas state and local governments. Nationally, the public cost was close to \$11 billion. Due to declining teen birth rates, however, the national cost declined to \$9.4 billion in 2010, according to an updated analysis. The majority of the costs of teen childbearing are associated with the consequences many children of teen mothers experience, including reliance on public health care and the child welfare system, higher rates of incarceration, and lost tax revenue due to lower lifetime earnings and spending. Many of the financial costs associated with teen pregnancy and childbearing are well documented and outlined above. The human costs, however, are impossible to quantify. These are discussed in greater detail in accompanying briefs.

Source: *Counting it Up: The Public Costs of Teen Childbearing in Arkansas in 2008*. The National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy

Teen Pregnancy

- In Arkansas, **8,190 teens, or approximately 82 of every 1,000 girls aged 15 through 19**, became pregnant in 2008, the most recent year for which data are available.
- Although the state's teen pregnancy rate **declined 29 percent between 1988 and 2008**, Arkansas still had the **fifth highest** teen pregnancy rate in the nation in 2008.

Teen Birth

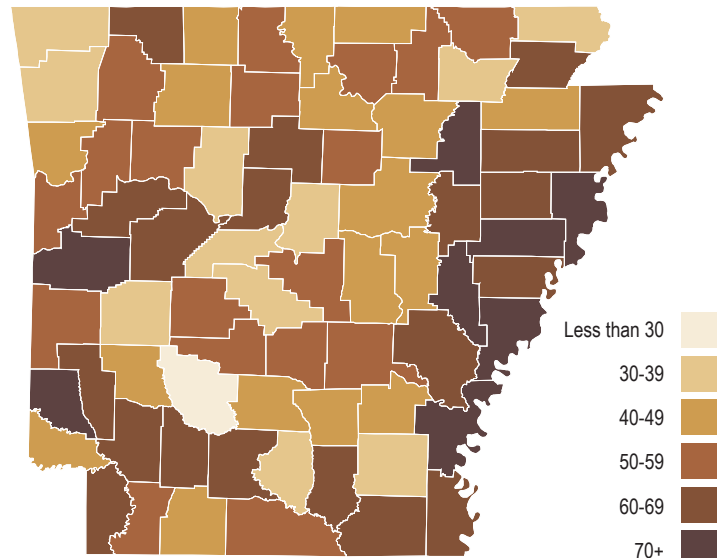
- In 2012 Arkansas had the **fourth highest teen birth rate** in the United States.
- In 2012 **4,310 Arkansans aged 15 through 19 gave birth**—that's approximately 12 every day.
- Every year some **20 percent** of teen births are not the teen's first.
- Between 2007 and 2012, the state's **teen birth rate declined by 33 percent**.

Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS)

- According to the 2013 YRBS, more than **49 percent of high school students in Arkansas have had sexual intercourse**. This ranges from 37 percent of freshmen, to 65 percent of high school seniors.

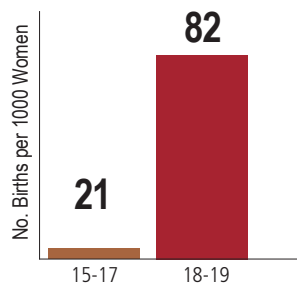
Teen Birth Rate by County, 2010-2012

Source: Arkansas Department of Health, Health Statistic Branch



Arkansas Teen Birth Rates by Age, 2012

Source: Arkansas Department of Health, Health Statistics Branch



Arkansas Teen Birth Rates by Race/Ethnicity, 2012

Source: Arkansas Department of Health, Health Statistics Branch

