

# Teen Sex and Pregnancy

## SEXUAL ACTIVITY

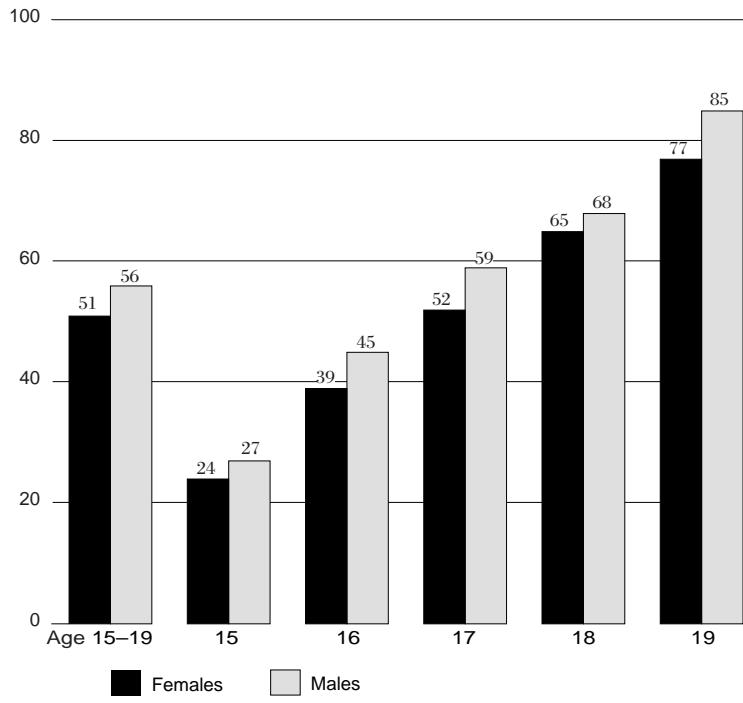
- Most very young teens have not had intercourse: 8 in 10 girls and 7 in 10 boys are sexually inexperienced at age 15.
- The likelihood of teenagers' having intercourse increases steadily with age; however, about 1 in 5 young people do not have intercourse while teenagers.
- Most young people begin having sex in their mid-to-late teens, about 8 years before they marry; more than half of 17-year-olds have had intercourse.
- While 93% of teenage women report that their first intercourse was voluntary, one-quarter of these young women report that it was unwanted.

- The younger women are when they first have intercourse, the more likely they are to have had unwanted or nonvoluntary first sex—7 in 10 of those who had sex before age 13, for example.

- Nearly two-thirds (64%) of sexually active 15–17-year-old women have partners who are within two years of their age; 29% have sexual partners who are 3–5 years older, and 7% have partners who are six or more years older.
- Most sexually active young men have female partners close to their age: 76% of the partners of 19-year-old men are either 17 (33%) or 18 (43%); 13% are 16, and 11% are aged 13–15.

## Sex is rare among very young teenagers, but common in the later teenage years.

% who have had sexual intercourse at different ages, 1995



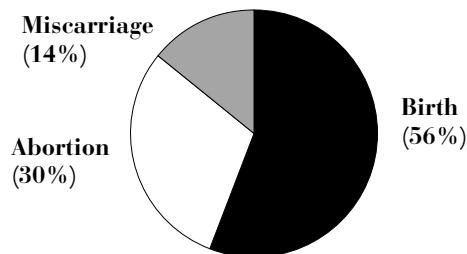
## CONTRACEPTIVE USE

- A sexually active teenager who does not use contraceptives has a 90% chance of becoming pregnant within one year.
- Teenage women's contraceptive use at first intercourse rose from 48% to 65% during the 1980s, almost entirely because of a doubling in condom use. By 1995, use at first intercourse reached 78%, with 2/3 of it condom use.
- 9 in 10 sexually active women and their partners use a contraceptive method, although not always consistently or correctly.
- About 1 in 6 teenage women practicing contraception combine two methods, primarily the condom and another method.
- The method teenage women most frequently use is the pill (44%), followed by the condom (38%). About 10% rely on the injectable, 4% on withdrawal and 3% on the implant.
- Teenagers are less likely than older women to practice contraception without interruption over the course of a year, and more likely to practice contraception sporadically or not at all.

## SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED DISEASES (STDs)

- Every year 3 million teens—about 1 in 4 sexually experienced teens—acquire an STD.
- In a single act of unprotected sex with an infected partner, a teenage woman has a 1% risk of acquiring HIV, a 30% risk of getting genital herpes and a 50% chance of contracting gonorrhea.
- Chlamydia is more common among teens than among older

## Teen Pregnancy Outcomes



**More than half (56%) of the 905,000 teenage pregnancies in 1996 ended in births (2/3 of which were unplanned).**

men and women; in some settings, 10–29% of sexually active teenage women and 10% of teenage men tested for STDs have been found to have chlamydia.

- Teens have higher rates of gonorrhea than do sexually active men and women aged 20–44.

- In some studies, up to 15% of sexually active teenage women have been found to be infected with the human papillomavirus, many with a strain of the virus linked to cervical cancer.

- Teenage women have a higher hospitalization rate than older women for acute pelvic inflammatory disease (PID), which is most often caused by untreated gonorrhea or chlamydia. PID can lead to infertility and ectopic pregnancy.

### TEEN PREGNANCY

- Each year, almost 1 million teenage women—10% of all women aged 15–19 and 19% of those who have had sexual intercourse—become pregnant.

- The overall U.S. teenage pregnancy rate declined 17% between 1990 and 1996, from 117 pregnancies per 1,000 women aged 15–19 to 97 per 1,000.

- 78% of teen pregnancies are unplanned, accounting for about 1/4 of all accidental pregnancies annually.
- 6 in 10 teen pregnancies occur among 18–19 year-olds.
- 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.
- Steep decreases in the pregnancy rate among sexually experienced teenagers accounted for most of the drop in the overall teenage pregnancy rate in the early-to-mid 1990s. While 20% of the decline is because of decreased sexual activity, 80% is due to more effective contraceptive practice.

### CHILDBEARING

- 13% of all U.S. births are to teens.
- 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.
- 78% of births to teens occur outside of marriage.
- Teens now account for 31% of all nonmarital births, down from 50% in 1970.

- 1/4 of teenage mothers have a second child within 2 years of their first.

### TEEN MOTHERS AND THEIR CHILDREN

- Teens who give birth are much more likely to come from poor or low-income families (83%) than are teens who have abortions (61%) or teens in general (38%).
- 7 in 10 teen mothers complete high school, but they are less likely than women who delay childbearing to go on to college.

- In part because most teen mothers come from disadvantaged backgrounds, 28% of them are poor while in their 20s and early 30s; only 7% of women who first give birth after adolescence are poor at those ages.
- 1/3 of pregnant teens receive inadequate prenatal care; babies born to young mothers are more likely to be low-birth-weight, to have childhood health problems and to be hospitalized than are those born to older mothers.

### ABORTION

- Nearly 4 in 10 teen pregnancies (excluding those ending in miscarriages) are terminated by abortion. There were about 274,000 abortions among teens in 1996.
- Since 1980, abortion rates among sexually experienced teens have declined steadily, because fewer teens are becoming pregnant, and in recent years, fewer pregnant teens have chosen to have an abortion.
- The reasons most often given by teens for choosing to have an abortion are being concerned about how having a baby would change their lives, feeling that they are not mature enough to have a child and having financial problems.

- 29 states currently have mandatory parental involvement laws in effect for a minor seeking an abortion: AL, AR, DE, GA, ID, IN, IO, KS, KY, LA, MD, MA, MI, MN, MS, MO, NE, NC, ND, OH, PA, RI, SC, SD, UT, VA, WV, WI and WY.

- 61% of minors who have abortions do so with at least one parent's knowledge; 45% of parents are told by their daughter. The great majority of parents support their daughter's decision to have an abortion.

### SOURCES

The data in this fact sheet are the most current available. Most of the data are from research conducted by The Alan Guttmacher Institute (AGI) or published in the peer-reviewed journal *Family Planning Perspectives* and the 1994 AGI report *Sex and America's Teenagers*. Additional sources include the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the National Center for Health Statistics.



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