

Oklahoma Alert: Teen birth rates remain among the highest in U.S.



A report from the Oklahoma Institute for Child Advocacy

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Teen and unplanned pregnancy is preventable. Investments in prevention pays dividends for our state's workforce and economic prosperity and is a smart strategy for increasing graduation rates; reducing public health costs; maintaining a skilled workforce; and ensuring more families are stable and self-supporting. While Oklahoma's teen birth rates are among the highest in the nation, communities that are expanding evidence-based programs and adolescent health services are showing strong returns on their investments.

Trends in the number of births to Oklahoma teens

| <u>Ages</u> | <u>2010</u> | <u>2011</u> | <u>2012</u> | <u>2013</u> | <u>2014</u> | <u>2015</u> |
|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| 14 & younger | 101 | 64 | 66 | 69 | 58 | 43 |
| 15 – 17 | 1,917 | 1,684 | 1,667 | 1,517 | 1,269 | 1,225 |
| 18 – 19 | 4,573 | 4,335 | 4,176 | 3,792 | 3,523 | 3,166 |
| TOTAL | 6,591 | 6,083 | 5,909 | 5,379 | 4,850 | 4,434 |

“More older teen girls (aged 18-19) in Oklahoma gave birth in 2015 than entered Oklahoma State University and the University of Oklahoma as new, in-state freshmen students that fall semester.”

- Sharon Rodine,
Oklahoma Institute
for Child Advocacy

A closer look at the 2015 teen birth numbers

The Oklahoma State Department of Health reported 4,434 births to teens ages 19 and younger in 2015, a decrease of 9% from 2014. Over one-fourth (29%) of the births were to teens ages 17 and younger, with 43 of those births occurring among 10 to 14 year-olds. Seven out of 10 births (71%) were to older teens, ages 18 to 19. Nearly one in every five births (18%) was to a girl already a parent, with over one out of 8 (84%) paid by Medicaid.

Number of births by birth order

| | |
|-----------------------|-------|
| 1 st birth | 3,611 |
| 2 nd birth | 707 |
| 3 rd birth | 94 |
| 4 th birth | 15 |
| 5 th birth | 2 |
| Unknown | 5 |

Percentage of births by race/ethnicity

| | |
|------------------|-----|
| White | 70% |
| Black | 13% |
| American Indian | 16% |
| Asian | 1% |
| <i>Hispanic*</i> | 20% |

2015 teen birth rates**

| <u>Age</u> | <u>OK</u> | <u>U.S.</u> |
|------------|-------------|-------------|
| 15 – 19 | 34.8 | 22.3 |
| 15 – 17 | 15.9 | 9.9 |
| 18 – 19 | 64.2 | 40.7 |

* Hispanic may be of any race

** Rates = number of births per 1,000 females the same age

Sources: Oklahoma State Dept. of Health, Center for Health Statistics, Vital Statistics 2015
CDC, National Vital Statistics, Final Birth Report for 2015 (state and national rates)

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Teen births in Oklahoma are declining, though more slowly than other states.



Compared to all other states in 2015, Oklahoma remained among those with the **highest (worst)** teen birth rates for all age ranges. The 18-19 year-old rate moved to 3rd highest, down from 2nd in 2014.

- 2nd highest birth rate to teens, ages 15 – 19 (tied with MS)
- 4th highest birth rate to young teens, ages 15 – 17
- 3rd highest birth rate to older teens, ages 18 – 19

States with the highest birth rates for ages 15-19 in 2015:

| | |
|---------------------|-------------|
| Arkansas | 38.0 |
| Mississippi | 34.8 |
| OKLAHOMA | 34.8 |
| New Mexico | 34.6 |
| Texas | 34.6 |
| U.S. Average | 22.3 |

Priorities for action:

- Where teen birth rates/ numbers are highest
- Youth at greatest risk for early sexual activity
- Children and youth growing up in poverty
- Children experiencing early school failure or family dysfunction

Groups with high teen birth numbers and rates:

School dropouts - 30% of girls cite pregnancy/parenting as the reason

Hispanics - highest birth rates among all racial and ethnic groups

Older teens (18-19) - over *two-thirds* of all teen births each year

Youth in, or formerly in, foster care - a very vulnerable population

Victims of sexual abuse - in national studies, two-thirds of teen mothers indicate their first sexual intercourse was *non-consensual* and occurred *between ages 9-12*; preventing child sexual abuse is critical!

Teen parents - one in every five teen births is a subsequent birth

Siblings of teen parents - at high risk of becoming a teen parent

Disconnected youth - young people who are not connected to school or work have the greatest potential for risk-taking behaviors

Effective ways to reduce teen birth numbers and rates in your community:

- **Expand high quality, evidence-based, well-evaluated programs that work:** *Power Through Choices, Making a Difference, Making Proud Choices, Carrera Model, Be Proud-Be Responsible and SHARP.*
- **Build community and tribal partnerships that promote educational programs and health services,** like the Central Oklahoma Teen Pregnancy Prevention Collaboration, Cherokee Nation, Choctaw Nation, Muscogee Nation, and Tulsa Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy (www.healthyteensok.org).
- **Use the latest research and resources** from the National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy, www.thenc.org; Advocates for Youth, www.advocatesforyouth.org; and the Annie E. Casey Foundation's KIDS COUNT Data Center, <http://datacenter.kidscount.org/data#OK/2/0>
- **Engage youth as partners in prevention,** check Forum for Youth Investment: www.readyby21.org.