

Teen Birth

Headline

The 2001 birth rate among teens 15-19 years old is the lowest rate ever reported in the United States. ([See Figure 1](#))

Importance

Teenage parents are more disadvantaged than other teens, and they are generally unprepared for the financial responsibilities and the emotional and psychological challenges of early childbearing. A recent study of the consequences of teen childbearing suggests that the effects of teen motherhood are borne primarily by the children of teen mothers, followed by the mothers themselves, and by government and taxpayers.¹ Children born to adolescent mothers are more likely to be born prematurely, to have a low birth weight, and to die as infants.² The children generally have less stimulating home environments and poorer academic and behavioral outcomes than children born to older mothers³ and are more likely themselves to initiate sex at an early age and to have a teen birth.⁴

Trends

After an increase in the teen birth rate in the late 1980s, the birth rate for adolescent females of all ages has declined steadily since 1991. The 2001 rate of 45.8 births per 1,000 females ages 15-19 is a record low and substantially lower than the 1991 rate of 62.1 ([See Figure 1](#)). However, because the decline in the teen birth rate in the 1990s was preceded by an increase between 1986 and 1991, the teen birth rate in 2001 is only slightly lower than the rate in 1986 (50.2 per 1,000 females 15-19). Declines since 1991 are evident for both younger (15-17) and older (18-19) teen females. ([See Table 1](#))

Differences by Gender

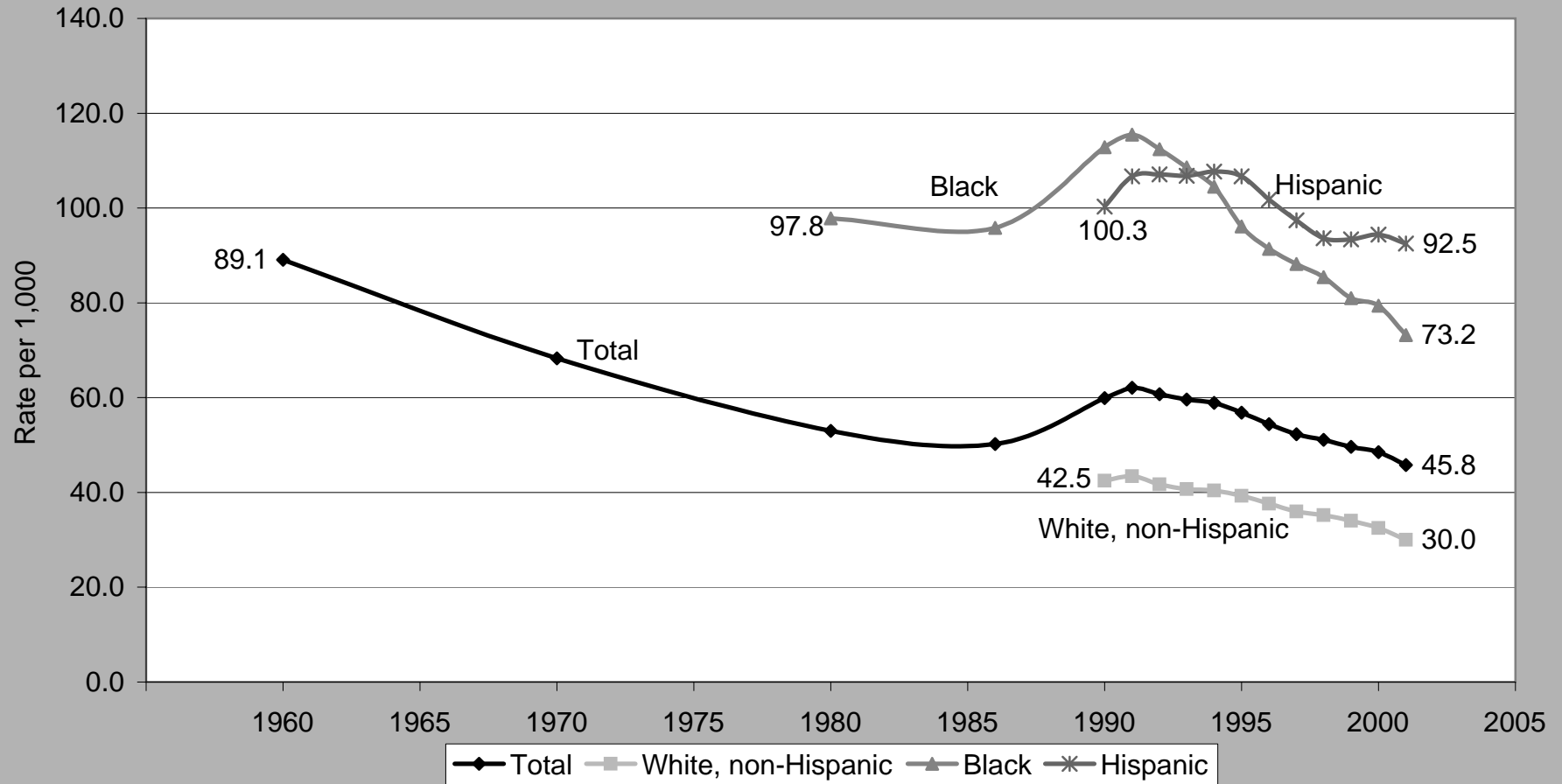
Adolescent males are less likely than females to have a child, due in part to the fact that females generally have older partners than males, as well as to under-reporting among males. For example, the teen birth rate for males ages 15-19 in 2001 (18.7 per 1,000 males 15-19) is less than half the rate for female teens (45.8 per 1,000 females 15-19). The trend in birth rates in the late 1990s is declining for both adolescent males and females. The adolescent male birth rate, however, began declining a few years after the adolescent female birth rate. ([See Table 1](#))

Differences by Race and Ethnicity

In the past, black teens had the highest female teen birth rates. However, rates among Hispanic teens began declining later in the 1990s than rates among black or white teens, and Hispanic teens currently have the highest teen birth rates. Rates per 1,000 ages 15-19

Figure 1

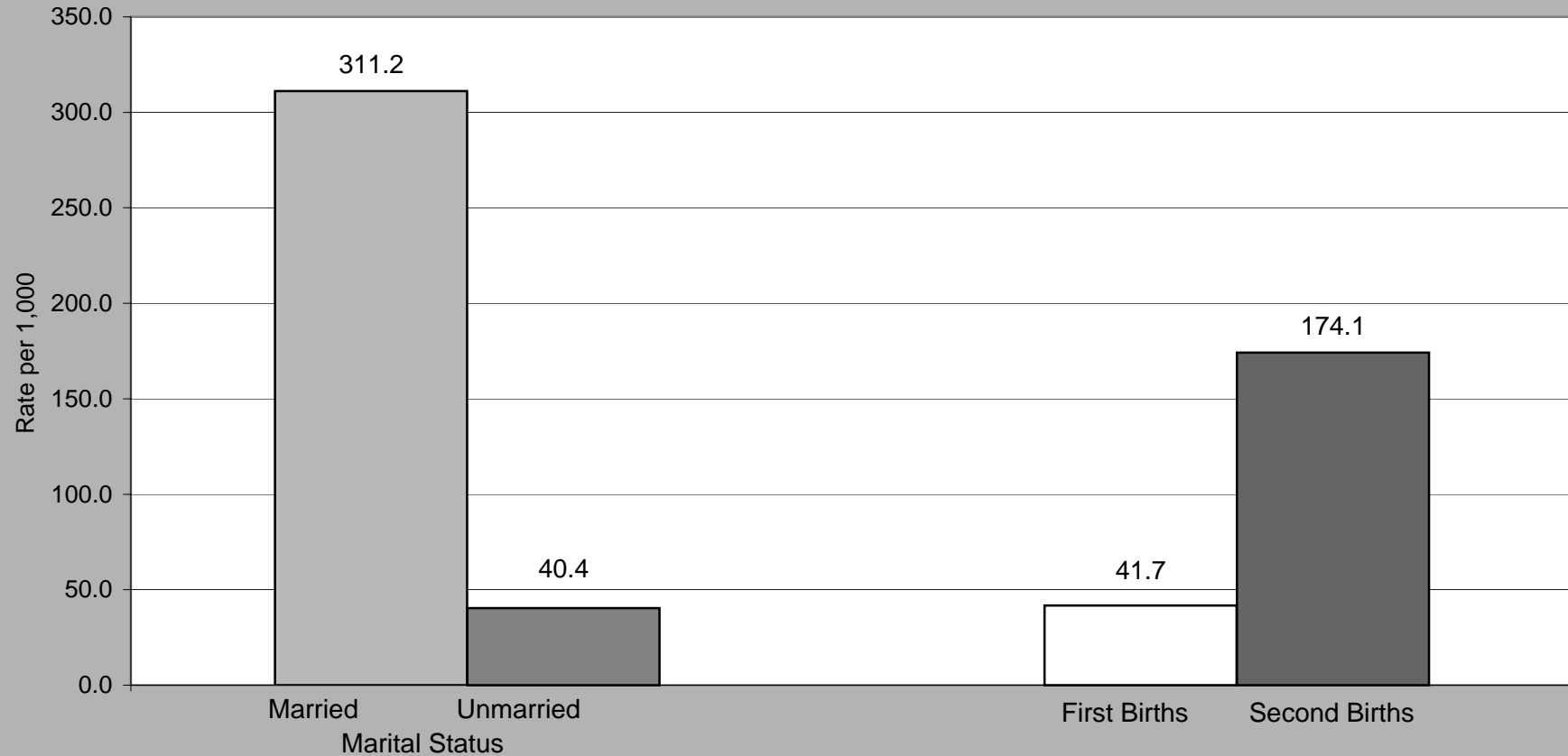
Birth Rates (per 1,000) for Females Ages 15-19 by Race and Ethnicity, Selected Years 1960-2001



Source: Data for 1960 from: National Center for Health Statistics. Health, United States, 2001 With Urban and Rural Health Chartbook. Hyattsville, Maryland: 2001, Table 3. Data for 1970-2000 from: Martin JA, Hamilton BE, Ventura SJ, Menacker F, Park MM. Births: Final data for 2000. National vital statistics reports; vol 50 no. 5: tables 4, 18, and 20 Hyattsville, Maryland: National Center for Health Statistics. 2002; Data for 2001 from: Martin JA, Hamilton BE, Ventura SJ, Menacker F, Park MM, Sutton PD. Births: Final data for 2001. National vital statistics reports; vol 51 no.2. Hyattsville, Maryland: National Center for Health Statistics. 2002. Tables 3, 8, 17, and 20.

Figure 2

Birth Rates (per 1,000) for Females Ages 15-19, by Marital Status and Birth Order, 1999



¹ Rates for first births are based on women ages 15-19 who have never had a birth. Rates for second birth are based on women ages 15-19 who have had a birth

Sources: Data for first and second births from: Ventura SJ, Mathews TJ, Hamilton BE. Births to teenagers in the United States, 1940-2000. Table 3. National vital statistics reports; vol 49 no 10. Hyattsville, Maryland: National Center for Health Statistics. 2001. Data for marital status 1999 from: Child Trends communication with Stephanie Ventura of the National Center for Health Statistics on 6/15/01. Data for unmarried women from: Martin JA, Hamilton BE, Ventura SJ, Menacker F, Park MM. Births: Final data for 2000. Tables 4, 18, and 20. National vital statistics reports; vol 50 no. 5: Hyattsville, Maryland: National Center for Health Statistics. 2002.

Table 1

Birth Rates (Births per 1,000) for Males and Females Ages 10-19, Selected Years 1960-2001

	1960	1970	1980	1986	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001
15-19 Year-old Females	89.1	68.3	53.0	50.2	59.9	62.1	60.7	59.6	58.9	56.8	54.4	52.3	51.1	49.6	48.5	45.8
Race/Ethnicity																
White	-	-	45.4	42.3	50.8	52.8	51.8	51.1	51.1	50.1	48.1	46.3	45.4	44.6	43.6	41.4
White, non-Hispanic	-	-	41.2	-	42.5	43.4	41.7	40.7	40.4	39.3	37.6	36.0	35.2	34.0	32.5	30.0
Black	-	-	97.8	95.8	112.8	115.5	112.4	108.6	104.5	96.1	91.4	88.2	85.4	81.0	79.4	73.2
Hispanic ¹	-	-	82.2	-	100.3	106.7	107.1	106.8	107.7	106.7	101.8	97.4	93.6	93.4	94.4	92.5
American Indian	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	67.8	66.0
Asian or Pacific Islander	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	21.6	20.4
Marital status																
Marital	530.6	443.7	349.5	351.8	420.2	410.4	397.8	388.0	350.5	362.4	344.3	323.0	322.1	311.2	-	-
Non-marital	15.3	22.4	27.6	32.3	42.5	44.8	44.6	44.5	46.4	44.4	42.9	42.2	41.5	40.4	39.6	37.4
Live-birth order r²																
First births	65.8	57.6	44.5	41.9	47.9	49.6	48.9	49.3	50.0	49.2	46.7	44.7	43.3	41.7	-	-
Second births	359.4	227.7	187.8	193.2	218.2	220.9	216.9	203.6	189.6	177.5	173.5	173.7	174.6	174.1	-	-
15-19 Year-old Males																
All Races³	-	-	18.8	17.9	23.5	24.8	24.6	24.8	25.0	24.3	23.0	22.2	21.6	21.0	20.2	18.7
White	-	-	15.4	13.8	18.1	19.1	18.9	19.2	19.8	19.7	18.8	18.2	18.0	17.5	16.8	15.6
Black	-	-	40.1	42.6	55.2	58.0	57.4	56.6	54.6	50.5	47.2	45.6	43.3	41.5	40.1	37.1
10-14 Year-old Females	0.8	1.2	1.1	1.3	1.4	1.4	1.4	1.4	1.4	1.3	1.2	1.1	1.0	0.9	0.9	0.8
Race/Ethnicity																
White	-	-	0.6	0.6	0.7	0.8	0.8	0.8	0.8	0.8	0.8	0.7	0.6	0.6	0.6	0.5
White, non-Hispanic	-	-	0.4	-	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3
Black	-	-	4.3	4.7	4.9	4.8	4.7	4.6	4.6	4.2	3.6	3.3	2.9	2.6	2.4	2.2
Hispanic ¹	-	-	1.7	-	2.4	2.4	2.6	2.7	2.7	2.7	2.6	2.3	2.1	2.0	1.9	1.7
American Indian	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1.3	1.2
Asian or Pacific Islander	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0.3	0.2
15-17 Year-old Females	43.9	38.8	32.5	30.5	37.5	38.7	37.8	37.8	37.6	36.0	33.8	32.1	30.4	28.7	27.4	25.2
Race/Ethnicity																
White	-	-	25.5	23.8	29.5	30.7	30.1	30.3	30.7	30.0	28.4	27.1	25.9	24.8	23.6	21.9
White, non-Hispanic	-	-	22.4	-	23.2	23.6	22.7	22.7	22.8	22.0	20.6	19.4	18.4	17.1	15.8	14.1
Black	-	-	72.5	69.3	82.3	84.1	81.3	79.8	76.3	69.7	64.7	60.8	56.8	52.0	50.4	45.6
Hispanic ¹	-	-	52.1	-	65.9	70.6	71.4	71.7	74.0	72.9	69.0	66.3	62.3	61.3	60.0	57.0
American Indian	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	39.6	36.7
Asian or Pacific Islander	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	11.5	10.2
Marital status																
Marital	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Non-marital	-	17.1	20.6	22.8	29.6	30.9	30.4	30.6	32.0	30.5	29.0	28.2	27.0	25.5	24.4	22.5
18-19 Year-old Females	166.7	114.7	82.1	79.6	88.6	94.4	94.5	92.1	91.5	89.1	86.0	83.6	82.0	80.3	79.2	75.5
Race/Ethnicity																
White	-	-	73.2	70.1	78.0	83.5	83.8	82.1	82.1	81.2	78.4	75.9	74.6	73.5	72.7	69.7
White, non-Hispanic	-	-	67.7	-	66.6	70.5	69.8	67.7	67.4	66.1	63.7	61.9	60.6	58.9	56.8	52.9
Black	-	-	135.1	135.1	152.9	158.6	157.9	151.9	148.3	137.1	132.5	130.1	126.9	122.8	121.3	113.2
Hispanic ¹	-	-	126.9	-	147.7	158.5	159.7	159.1	158.0	157.9	151.1	144.3	140.1	139.4	143.6	143.5
American Indian	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	113.1	111.9
Asian or Pacific Islander	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	37.0	35.6
Marital status																
Marital	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Non-marital	-	32.9	39.0	48.0	60.7	65.7	67.3	66.9	70.1	67.6	65.9	65.2	64.5	63.3	62.9	60.1

¹ Persons of Hispanic Origin may be of any race

² Rates for first births are based on women ages 15-19 who have never had a birth. Rates for second birth are based on women who have had a birth

³ Includes races other than white and black

Sources: Data for 1960 and for white non-Hispanic and Hispanic birth rates in 1980 from: National Center for Health Statistics, United States, 2001 With Urban and Rural Health Chartbook, Hyattsville, Maryland: 2001, Table 3. Data for white, non-Hispanic and Hispanic birth rates years 1990-2000 and first and second births from: Ventura SJ, Mathews T, Behrman BJ, Hamilton BE. Births to teenagers in the United States, 1940-2000. National vital statistics reports; vol 49 no 10 Hyattsville, Maryland: National Center for Health Statistics. 2001. Data for marital births 1960-1970 and non-marital births from:

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CA. Nonmarital childbearing in the United States 1940-1998. National vital statistics reports; vol 48 no 16. Table 8. Hyattsville, Maryland: National Center for Health Statistics. 2000.

marital status 1999 from: Child Trends communication with Stephanie Ventura of the National Center for Health Statistics or other data from 1960-2000 from: Martin JA, Hamilton

BE, Ventura SJ, Menacker F, Park MM. Births: Final data for 2000. Tables 3, 4, 18, and 20. National vital statistics reports; vol 51 no. 5. Hyattsville, Maryland: National Center for Health

Statistics. 2002. Data for 2001 from: Martin JA, Hamilton BE, Ventura SJ, Menacker F, Park MM, Sutton PD. Births: Final data for 2001. National vital statistics reports; vol 51 no.2. Hyattsville,

Maryland: National Center for Health Statistics. 2002. Tables 3, 8, 17, and 20.