

Federal report shows drop in adolescent birth rate

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(Medical Xpress) -- The adolescent birth rate declined for the second consecutive year, preterm births declined for the third consecutive year, adolescent injury deaths declined, and fewer 12th graders binge drank, according to the federal government's annual statistical report on the well-being of the nation's children and youth.

However, a higher proportion of 8th graders used illicit drugs, more [children](#) were likely to live in poverty, and fewer children were likely to live with at least one parent working year round, full time, according to the report, America's Children: Key National Indicators of Well-Being 2011.

The report was compiled by the Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics, a working group of 22 federal agencies that collect, analyze, and convey data on issues related to children and families. The report uses the most recently available major federal statistics on children and youth to measure family and social environment, economic circumstances, health care, physical environment and safety, behavior, education, and health.

“It is reassuring to see continued declines in the preterm [birth rate](#) and adolescent [birth](#) rate,” said Alan E. Guttmacher, M.D., director of the Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health and Human Development.”

The report provides statistical information on children and families in a

non-technical, easy-to-use format to stimulate discussion among data providers, policymakers, and members of the public.

“This report documents some significant changes in several key areas,” said Edward Sondik, Ph.D., director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s National Center for Health Statistics. “Preliminary data show significant declines in infant mortality and in fatal injuries to teens. These are very interesting snapshots of children’s health that we have in this report.”

This year’s report includes a special feature on adoption. Special features focus on measures not available with sufficient frequency to be regular indicators or which provide more detailed information about a topic. According to the report, adoption is preferred over alternatives such as long term foster care or care in group homes, emergency shelters, and orphanages. The report also noted that although most adopted children thrive, children who are adopted, particularly those adopted beyond the first months of life, experience disruptions in parenting that can have longstanding implications for their development and well-being. Among the statistics in the adoption special feature:

- Approximately 2.5 percent of U.S. children joined their families through adoption
- 21.5 percent of adopted children were of a different race than their adoptive parent. This percentage varied by state from 8.4 to 42.5 percent
- 29 percent of adopted children had moderate to severe health problems, compared with 12 percent of all children.

Among the findings in this year’s report:

- A drop in births to adolescents, from 21.7 per 1,000 girls ages 15 to 17 (2008) to 20.1 per 1,000 (2009, preliminary data)
- A drop in the proportion of infants born before 37 weeks, from 12.3

percent (2008) to 12.2 percent (2009, preliminary data)

- A drop in injury-related deaths among teens ages 15-19 from 44 per 100,000 (2008, preliminary data) to 39 per 100,000 (2009, preliminary data)
- A drop in the proportion of 12th graders who binge drank, or reported having five or more alcoholic beverages in a row in the past 2 weeks, from 25 percent (2009) to 23 percent (2010)
- A drop in deaths before the first birthday, from 6.6 per 1,000 births (2008, preliminary data), to 6.4 per 1,000 births (2009, preliminary data)
- A drop in children ages 0-17 living in counties in which levels of one or more air pollutants were above allowable levels from 69 percent (2008) to 59 percent (2009)
- An increase of two points in the average mathematics score for 8th graders (2007 to 2009)
- An increase of three points in the average mathematics scale score for 12th graders (2005 to 2009)
- A rise in the proportion of 8th graders who reported using illicit drugs in the past 30 days, from 8 percent (2009) to 10 percent (2010)
- A drop in the percentage of children from birth to 17 years of age living with at least one parent employed year round full time, from 75 percent (2008) to 72 percent (2009)
- A rise in the proportion of children from birth to 17 years of age living in poverty, from 19 percent (2008) to 21 percent (2009)
- A rise in the proportion of households with children ages 0-17 reporting one or more of three housing problems: crowded housing, physically inadequate housing, or housing that costs more than 30 percent of household income, from 43 percent (2007) to 45 percent (2009)
- The percentage of children reported currently to have asthma did not significantly differ between 2008 and 2009. However, the report did reveal that the percentage of children with asthma has been steadily increasing (trending upward) between 2001 and 2009.

Provided by National Institutes of Health

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