

Teenage birth rates higher in more religious states

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Rates of births to teenage mothers are strongly predicted by conservative religious beliefs, even after controlling for differences in income and rates of abortion. Researchers writing in BioMed Central's open access journal *Reproductive Health* have found a strong association between teenage birth rates and state-level measures of religiosity in the U.S.

Joseph Strayhorn, an adjunct faculty member with Drexel University and the University of Pittsburgh, and Jillian Strayhorn used data from the Pew Forum's US Religious Landscapes Survey and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to evaluate the state level effects of belief on teen birth rates. Joseph Strayhorn said, "The magnitude of the correlation between religiosity and teen birth rate astonished us. Teen birth is more highly correlated with some of the religiosity items on the Religious Landscapes Survey than some of those items are correlated with each other".

The religiosity of a state was determined by averaging the percents of respondents who agreed with the eight most conservative opinions possible in the Religious Landscapes Survey, such as 'There is only one way to interpret the teachings of my religion' or 'Scripture should be taken literally, word for word'.

According to Strayhorn, "Our findings by themselves do not, of course, permit causal inferences. But, if we may speculate on the most probable explanation, we conjecture that religious communities in the US are more successful in discouraging the use of contraception among their

teenagers than they are in discouraging [sexual intercourse](#) itself".

Religiosity and teen birth rate in the United States; Joseph M Strayhorn and Jillian C Strayhorn; *Reproductive Health* (in press); www.reproductive-health-journal.com/

Source: BioMed Central ([news](#) : [web](#))

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