

US teen births decline: study

5 April 2011, by Karin Zeitvogel

The US teen birth rate fell to the lowest level on record in 2009 but remains one of the highest in developed countries, a report released Tuesday said.

In 2009, some 410,000 teenaged [girls](#) aged 15 to 19 years gave birth in the United States, making for a national teen birth rate of around 39 births per 1,000 females, a report released by the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) (CDC) said.

The teen birth rate was down 37 percent from 20 years ago, when there were 61.8 births per 1,000 girls aged 15 to 19, said the report, which is the second in as many months to show a sharp drop in rate of teens giving birth.

A National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS) report in early February also showed that teen births have fallen to record-low levels.

Going hand-in-hand with the decline in the teen birth rate were decreases in the percentages of US boys and girls who became sexually active during their teen years and in the percentage of sexually active teens who did not use birth control, the CDC study found.

In 2009, less than half of teens -- 46 percent -- had had sexual intercourse, compared to 54 percent in 1991.

And among sexually active US teens, 12 percent said in 2009 that they did not use birth control the last time they had sex, compared to 16 percent 20 years ago.

Teen births raise concern because babies born to teens are more likely to be underweight or preterm than infants born to older women, and are more likely to die during infancy, both the CDC and NCHS reports say.

"Teen childbearing also perpetuates a cycle of disadvantage: teen mothers are less likely to finish high school, and their children are more likely to

have low school achievement, drop out of high school, and give birth themselves as teens," the CDC report said.

"Each year, teen childbearing costs the United States approximately \$6 billion in lost tax revenue and nearly \$3 billion in public expenditures. However, these costs are \$6.7 billion lower than they would have been had teen childbearing not decreased."

But, despite the good news, the US teen birth rate remains one of the highest in developed countries, says the CDC report, citing the most recent available UN data.

According to the UN Demographic Yearbook 2008, the teen birth rate in Canada was 14 per 1,000 girls, in Japan it was five per 1,000 and in Singapore around six per 1,000 girls.

In France and Germany in 2008, around 10 babies were born to every 1,000 girls age 15 to 19.

The highest teen birth rate in Europe was in Bulgaria, where in 2008, 43.4 babies were born per 1,000 teen girls.

To bring down the US [teen birth](#) rate, "teens need sex education, the opportunity to talk with their parents about pregnancy prevention, and those who become sexually active need access to affordable, effective birth control," the CDC said.

But only around two-thirds of girls and just over half of boys in the United States received sex education about both abstinence and birth control, and even smaller percentages -- 44 percent of girls and fewer than three in 10 boys -- spoke with their parents about sex.

Sexually active girls were more likely to have received a method of birth control or a prescription for a contraceptive method from a health care provider if they had had a sex talk with their parents.

Sixty-four percent of girls who spoke with their parents about sex had access to a method of birth control compared to 37 percent who had not had the sex chat.

Last month, two Democratic Party lawmakers proposed a bill to end funding for abstinence-only sex education, saying the policy favored by the administration of former president George W. Bush had wasted more than \$1.5 billion.

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