



Teen Birth Rates in Riverside County, 1997—2006

Key Findings

- Teen birth rates have significantly decreased in the past decade throughout the US, California and Riverside County.
- Despite significant declines in all teen births in Riverside County from 1997 to 2004, there was an increase among African Americans teens in the last two years.

Introduction

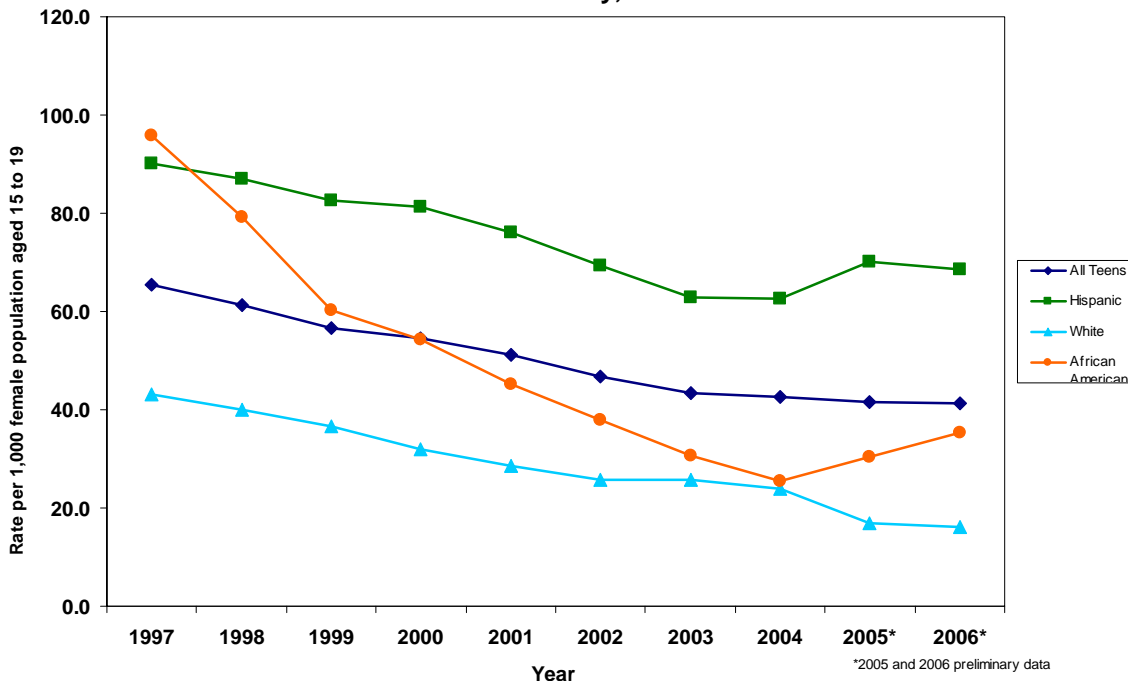
Research has shown teen pregnancy can result in adverse life outcomes for both mother and child. Teen mothers are less likely to complete high school, have higher poverty rates, and are more likely to utilize public assistance. Children of teen mothers are more likely to be less healthy, more likely to be abused, and be placed in foster care.¹

Many social and public programs have been funded over the past few decades to reduce the rate of teen pregnancy. This brief will examine whether this rate has been reduced in Riverside County.

Teen Birth Rates in Riverside: Trends over the past decade

Over the past decade, the overall birth rate in Riverside County to mothers aged 15 to 19 years has steadily declined from 65.4 live births per 1000 population in 1997 to 41.4 live births per 1000 population in 2006. This represents a 37 percent decrease in births to teen mothers in Riverside County. From 1997 to 2004, the sharpest reduction in rates was among African American teen mothers with a 74% decline. Hispanics have the highest rate of teen births, almost 50% higher than the overall teen birth rate. White teens have continued to have the lowest rates, almost 50% fewer live births per 1000 female population compared to the overall teen birth rate for Riverside County.

Teen Birth Rates by Race/Ethnicity from 1997 to 2006, Riverside County, California



Comparison to State and National Teen Birth Rates

In 2005 and 2006, following a 14 year decline in the teen birth rate, there was a 3% increase nationally. In Riverside County, however, a slight decrease was seen in the teen birth rate. The rates, however, between the US and Riverside County in 2006 are not disparate. By 2006, the teen birth rate in Riverside County was 41.4 live births per 1000 female teens, which is slightly lower than the US rate of 41.9 live births per 1000 female teens.

Percent Change in Birth Rates from 2005 to 2006: Racial/Ethnic Differences

When the change in teen birth rates from 2005 to 2006 was examined by racial/ethnic category, striking disparities were evident. Nationwide, there were increases in the rates among Hispanics (+2%), Whites (+3%) and African Americans (+5%). In Riverside County, there were decreases in the rates among White teens (-4%) and Hispanic teens (-2%). There was a 16% increase in teen births among African Americans from 2005 to 2006, despite this group having experienced the sharpest decline in rates over the previous 8 year period.

Future Directions

Future plans are to track these trends over time to see if they continue and to research potential reasons for increases seen among African American teens. We also plan to compare rates among younger and older teen mothers, rates of multiple pregnancies in our teen mothers, and rates of sexually transmitted diseases.

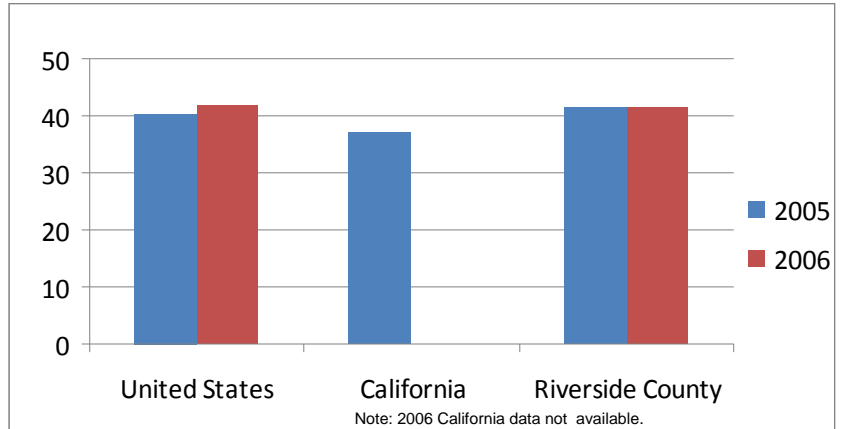
From the desk of Priscilla Webster— Public Health Program Chief MCAH/Family Planning

Teen pregnancy prevention programs have been successful in reducing the number of teen births in Riverside County over the past 8 years. Our community has a variety of teen pregnancy prevention programs that focus on teens in multiple settings such as after-school programs, youth-related organizations, and assisting in high school health classes. Programs offered through the Riverside County Department of Public Health include Adolescent Family Services, Teen Clinics, and Family Planning.

Comprehensive sexuality education has been initiated in many of Riverside County School Districts and is considered to have the greatest impact on reducing teen pregnancy. This educational program includes addressing abstinence to encourage teens to delay becoming sexually active, contraception, the risks of sexually transmitted diseases, the impact of drugs and alcohol have on sex, and developing relationships. We also emphasize the importance of including parents and providing information to help with the discussions about sex with their teens.

To continue to reduce teen pregnancy, it is important that we impart medically accurate information, strengthen a culture of personal responsibility, and support responsible policies that will give the teens and their parents information needed regarding sex and pregnancy. We will continue to target communities and populations who may benefit and are in need of information and prevention services.

Teen Birth Rates: US, California and Riverside County.



Suggested Citation

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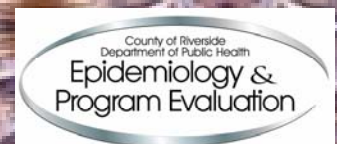
Phill Coon and Aaron Gardner

Acknowledgments:

Priscilla Webster

Reference:

1. Johnson HP: Birth Rates in California. *California Counts: Birth Rates in California*. November 2007, Vol. 9, Number 2.



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