The abortion rate among teens ages 15 to 19 declined by 67 percent between 1990 and 2011. Among both older and younger teens, abortion rates have been declining since the late 1980s.

**Importance**

About a quarter of all teenage pregnancies in the U.S. end in abortion.¹ Three in four teenage pregnancies (75 percent) are unintended, and two out of every five unintended teen pregnancies (42 percent) ended in abortion in 2011.² Teens may choose to have an abortion because they have concerns about how having a baby would derail important personal goals (for example, completing their education); they worry about the financial responsibilities associated with parenthood; or they feel that they are not mature enough to become a parent.³ Teen abortion rates are sensitive to a number of factors, including whether pregnancies are intended, personal choice, and policies that expand or restrict access to abortion.
Trends

Government estimates indicate that teen abortion rates increased during the 1970s, stabilized during the 1980s at around 43 per 1,000 females ages 15 to 19, then decreased steadily to about 14 per 1,000 by 2011. Similar declines are evident for all age groups. (Figure 2)

Rates for white, black, and Hispanic females have all fallen substantially since the early 1990s, although declines started a bit later for Hispanic females, in 1993. As of 2011, abortion rates have decreased by 74 percent among white teens, by 70 percent among Hispanic teens, and by 59 percent among black teens, since their respective peaks. (Figure 3)

Much of the decline in the teen abortion rate is related to a drop in the rate of teen pregnancy (which includes abortions, as well as births and fetal deaths). However, the proportion of teen pregnancies that end in abortion peaked in 1985, at 40 percent, and has been decreasing since then. In 2011, 26 percent of teen pregnancies ended in abortion. (Figure 1)  


Differences by Age

Abortion rates are lower for younger than for older teens. In 2011, the rate for teens under 15 was 2.2 per 1,000, compared with 7.5 per 1,000 for teens 15 to 17, and 22.2 per 1,000 among teens 18 to 19. (Figure 2) Although the abortion rate is higher among older teens, the proportion of pregnancies that end in abortion is twice as high among those younger than 15 as it is among their older peers.6

Figure 2

Abortion Rates (abortions per 1,000 females) for Adolescent Females, by Age: 1973-2011

* Rates computed by dividing the number of abortions to females under age 15 by the total number of females ages 14 years.

Differences by Race and Hispanic Origin\(^7\)

Abortion rates are much higher for black teens than for white and Hispanic teens. In 2011, there were 32.6 abortions per 1,000 black females ages 15-19, compared with 8.5 per 1,000 white adolescent females, and 12.7 per 1,000 Hispanic adolescent females. However, abortion rates among black adolescents have fallen more than have rates for the other groups, so the gap has narrowed over time. (Figure 3)

![Abortion Rates (abortions per 1,000 females) for Females Ages 15-19, by Race and Hispanic Origin: 1990-2011](https://www.guttmacher.org/sites/default/files/report_pdf/us-teen-pregnancy-trends-2011_0.pdf)

State and Local Estimates

State estimates are available from the following sources:

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2015). Abortion Surveillance -- United States, 2012. Available at: [http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/ss6410a1.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/ss6410a1.htm) (See Tables 3 and 5)

**International Estimates**

- International estimates for select countries are available from the following sources:


And for regions from:

http://www.guttmacher.org/media/presskits/abortion-WW/index.html

**National Goals**

*Healthy People 2020* includes several national goals related to teen abortion, including reductions in pregnancy, increases in rates of abstinence, and, among sexually active teens, increases in condom and hormonal birth control use.

More information is available at:


**What Works to Make Progress on This Indicator**


- Also, see the U.S. Office of Adolescent Health’s list of interventions meeting its criteria for effectiveness in pregnancy prevention: http://www.hhs.gov/ash/oah/oah-initiatives/teen_pregnancy/

**Related Indicators**

- Teen Pregnancy: www.childtrends.org/?indicators=teen-pregnancy

- Teen Births: www.childtrends.org/?indicators=teen-births
Definition
Abortion rates are calculated by dividing the number of reported abortions by the female population (in thousands). For example, among adolescent females ages 15 to 19, the rate is calculated by dividing the number of abortions to females ages 15 to 19 by the number of females ages 15 to 19 in the population (in thousands). For adolescent females under age 15, the rate is calculated by dividing the number of abortions by the total population of females aged 14. Data on abortions are collected from surveys administered to abortion providers.

Data Sources

Raw Data Source
Guttmacher Abortion Provider Surveys from the Guttmacher Institute
http://www.guttmacher.org/about/index.html
## Appendix 1 - Abortion Rates¹ (abortions per 1,000 females) for Adolescents, by Age, Race, and Hispanic Origin: Selected Years, 1975-2011

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Race/ethnicity rates for the under 15, 15 to 17 and 18 to 19 age groups use 1976 as the base year to calculate abortion rates. All other data use base year 2010.

Includes all persons of Hispanic origin regardless of race.

Rates are calculated as the number of abortions experienced by women aged 14 and younger divided by the female population aged 14. The denominator is limited to 14-year-olds because the majority of all pregnancies among women aged 14 and younger occur among 14-year-olds.


Endnotes


5 Rates computed by dividing the number of abortions to females under age 15 years, by the total number of females 14 years of age. Data in appendices are calculated differently.


7 Hispanics may be any race. Estimates for whites in this report do not include Hispanics of that race.