



For Immediate Release
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MTV Reality Shows Contribute to Declines in Teen Births **A Statement from The National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy**

(Washington, DC)—The popular MTV shows *16 and Pregnant* and *Teen Mom* have contributed to significant declines in the U.S. teen birth rate, according to [new research](#) released today by economists at the University of Maryland and Wellesley College. The coauthors of the study—University of Maryland and Brookings Institution economist Melissa Kearney and Wellesley College economist Phillip Levine—report that the programs led to a 5.7 percent reduction in teen births or about one-third of the decline in teen births in the 18 months following the premiere of *16 and Pregnant* in June 2009.

“This new research shows that, rather than glamorizing teen pregnancy and parenting as some have suggested, *16 and Pregnant* and *Teen Mom* are more sobering than salacious,” said Sarah Brown, CEO of The National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy. “Simply put, the media can be, and often is, a force for good.

“One of the nation’s great success stories of the past two decades has been the historic declines in teen pregnancy and childbearing. MTV and other media outlets have undoubtedly increased attention to the risks and reality of teen pregnancy and parenthood and, as this research shows, have likely played an important role in the nation’s remarkable progress. Indeed, reality series like these two MTV shows and other constructive programs should be seen as key parts of 21st century sex education.

“Other factors have also contributed to the impressive progress the nation has made, including increased investments in sex education programs that have strong evidence of success, substantial action and leadership on these issues at the state and local level, the economic downturn that began in about 2007, and increased availability and use of low-maintenance, highly-effective methods of contraception.

“This exciting new research from respected economists with a proven track record of studying teen pregnancy provides powerful new evidence of how media can shape behavior in positive ways. We look forward to learning more as other investigators examine the influence of media on teens’ decisions about sex, contraception, and pregnancy.”

Previous National Campaign Research on MTV influence:

- In a 2012 national survey, [77% of teens](#) said that *16 and Pregnant* and *Teen Mom* help teens better understand the challenges of pregnancy and parenting.
- In the same survey, [74% of adults with teen children](#) said they talked about sex, love, and relationships because of something they saw in popular media.

- A [2010 study of youth in Boys & Girls Clubs](#) found that a majority of teens who watched the show talked about it with a friend afterward and 40% talked to a *parent* about it. Also, 93% of teens in the study agreed (53% strongly agreed) with the statement that “I learned that teen parenthood is harder than I imagined.”

Background data:

- Teen pregnancy and childbearing are at historic lows.
- Since peaking in the early 1990s, the teen pregnancy rate in the U.S. has declined 44% and the teen birth rate has dropped 52%.
- Between 1991 and 2012, the birth rate declined 63% for non-Hispanic black teens, 56% for Hispanic teens, and 53% for non-Hispanic white teens.
- The 6% decline in the teen birth rate in 2012 comes on the heels of an 8% decline in 2011 and a 9% decline in 2010.
- The 9% decline in 2010—the first full year the MTV shows were on the air—was the largest single year decline in teen births since the 1940s.

The full report and additional supplementary materials are available on the [Wellesley College](#) website. Visit www.TheNationalCampaign.org for more information about teen pregnancy and childbearing and for other resources.

About The National Campaign: The National Campaign is a private, non-profit organization that seeks to improve the lives and future prospects of children and families by preventing teen and unplanned pregnancy.