



For Release
10am ET/May 19, 2015

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Sex in the (Non) City Why Rates of Teen Childbearing Are Higher in Rural Areas

(Washington, DC)—Rates of teen pregnancy and childbearing have plummeted over the past two decades and are at record lows. There have also been impressive declines in all 50 states. Still, many disparities remain, including the fact that teen childbearing remains far higher in rural areas than in urban areas. New research released by The National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy helps explain why.

Teen childbearing in rural counties is nearly one-third higher than the rate in the rest of the country and rates have been falling more slowly in rural areas compared to metropolitan areas. According to the new research report, *Sex in the (Non) City: Teen Childbearing in Rural America*, there are several factors that explain the gap between rural and metropolitan teen birth rates:

- Poverty and low college enrollment are major drivers of the rural/metropolitan disparity in teen birth rates.
- Other prominent factors include access to health services and whether the county was losing rather than attracting residents.
- Factors such as transportation barriers played only a minor role in explaining the disparity between rural and metropolitan counties.
- Difference in the racial/ethnic composition of the population also accounted for very little of the disparity, as did marriage among teens.

“Teen childbearing among rural youth is neither culturally entrenched nor intractable,” says report co-author Kelleen Kaye, Senior Director of Research at The National Campaign. “Improving access to clinical services and evidence-based teen pregnancy prevention programs that help teens plan and postpone childbearing may offer the most concrete, actionable opportunities for reducing teen pregnancy in rural areas.”

The full *Sex in the (Non) City* report, summary, and technical appendix can be found at: <http://TheNationalCampaign.org/resource/sex-non-city>.

About The National Campaign. The National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy seeks to improve the lives and future prospects of children and families. Our specific strategy is to prevent teen pregnancy and unplanned pregnancy among single, young adults. We support a combination of responsible values and behavior by both men and women and responsible policies in both the public and private sectors. For more information, visit www.TheNationalCampaign.org.