

# The Boston Globe

## Birth rate for teens hit low in 2010, CDC finds

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The birth rate for teenagers in the United States dropped to the lowest ever, with the fewest babies born to the age group since 1946, as health awareness efforts paid off, US officials said in a report released Tuesday.

The rate fell 9 percent in 2010 from a year earlier, and 44 percent since 1991, according to the report from the Atlanta-based Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. There were 34.3 births for every 1,000 15- to 19-year-old females in 2010.

Even with the decline, the United States has one of the highest birth rates for teenagers in industrialized countries, the CDC said. Teen childbearing is estimated to cost the public \$11 billion a year, the agency said. Reducing the rate of growth in costs was a central goal of President Obama's health care overhaul championed by the administration and congressional Democrats.

"Most researchers would say it's due to this magic combination of less sex and more contraception," said Bill Albert, the chief program officer of the National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy. "It's a combination of both."

New England continued to have the fewest teen pregnancies. The lowest rate in the nation was New Hampshire, at 15.7 births for every 1,000 teenage females age 15 to 19. Massachusetts was second, with 17.1, followed by Vermont, with 17.9.

Birth rates fell among all age, racial, and ethnic groups. The CDC credited "strong pregnancy prevention messages" with the declines, as well as an increase in contraception. It's also more common for teenagers to use two kinds of prevention - a condom in addition to birth control pills, for example - when they have sex, the report said.

"Teen pregnancy is not in the interests of the mother, the child, or society at large," Albert said.