



## Fewer Teen Moms as Birth Rate Hits New Low

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Birth rates for American teenagers hit a historic low in 2012, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) said Friday.

The birth rate for teenagers ages 15 to 19 declined 6% last year, with declines for younger and older teenagers and nearly all races, according to the report published Friday by the National Center for Health Statistics at the CDC. That's 29.4 births per 1,000 teenagers in the age group, the lowest figure in the 73 years the government has collected data.

A total of 329,797 babies were born in 2011 to women ages 15 to 19, resulting in a live birth rate of 31.3 per 1,000 women.

This "stunning" turnaround is one of the nation's greatest success stories during recent decades, said Bill Albert, chief program officer for the National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy.

"One of the nation's most pressing social problems—a challenge that many considered unsolvable and inevitable—has been proven to be quite something else. Obviously progress can and has been made on this issue that many once considered insolvable," he told MSNBC.

The country's total birth rate, which has declined steadily since 2007, was relatively flat last year, declining 1% from 2011. But pregnancy rates for women over the age of 30 increased moderately in the past year, including by 3% for those ages 30 to 34.

Teenagers who make responsible decisions deserve the credit for this "remarkable" change, which is attributed to less sex and more contraception, Albert said. Other factors that likely contributed to the downturn include the availability and effectiveness of more contraceptive methods, positive peer influence, and a slumping economy—the latter of which has been implicated in overall slowing American births.

The Obama administration has invested in approaches to prevent teen pregnancy. For example, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services in 2010 gave \$155 million in teen pregnancy prevention grants to states, nonprofit organizations, and school districts. The Affordable Care Act includes funding for states to support programs promoting abstinence, and more than \$33 million was issued the same year for abstinence programs in 29 states and Puerto Rico.

The country's teen birth rate fell by nearly a quarter between 1995 and 2002. Researchers found in a 2007 study that 86% of that decreased amount stemmed from an increased use of birth control among sexually active teens.

The country will most likely continue to see declines in teen pregnancies, Albert said. But the mission hasn't been accomplished, and Americans shouldn't mistake positive gains for victory.

"We've made great progress, however we have a lot of work to do," he said. "We're creating new teenagers every day in this country, so we have to keep at this."