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US Teenage Birth Rate at New Low, Government Report Shows

The rate of teenage pregnancy in the United States is at a historic low, and has dropped by more than half in the last two decades, declining across nearly all racial and ethnic groups, according to a government report released on Friday.

The rate for girls ages 15-19 dropped to 29.4 births per 1,000 last year from 31.3 per 1,000 in 2011. This was less than half the 61.8 births per 1,000 teenage girls recorded in 1991.

“That is an astonishing success in terms of this particular topic of debate,” said Brady Hamilton, a statistician with the National Center for Health Statistics who led the data collection. The Center is part of the U.S. government’s Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

The numbers have steadily declined over the last two decades, except for a brief spike in 2006 and 2007, Hamilton said. Among racial and ethnic groups, the largest decline since 2007 was reported for Hispanic teenagers, for whom the rate dropped 39 percent to 46.3 births per 1,000 in 2012 from 2007.

Last year, the rate of births for white, Black, Hispanic and Asian or Pacific Islander teenagers declined from 5 to 7 percent compared to 2011.

Bill Albert, a spokesman for the National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy, said it was impossible to predict if the drop in teenage mothers will continue, so it is important for parents and policymakers not to mistake progress for absolute victory.

“Obviously they are making better decisions, having less sex and using more contraception,” he said.

The Obama administration has invested in efforts aimed at lowering the rate of teenage pregnancies. In 2010, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services gave \$155 million in teenage pregnancy prevention grants to states, school districts and non-profit organizations.