

# The Washington Times

## US Fertility Rate on Rise, As Teen Birth Rate Declines

America's overall fertility rate ticked up for the first time in seven years, while its teen birthrate fell to its latest historic low in 2014, the federal government said Wednesday.

The new report — based on nearly 100 percent of birth certificates in all states, the District and U.S. territories — also showed that unwed childbearing fell again slightly, but for the sixth year in a row.

These and other statistics paint the picture of a nation where many women are waiting until after age 25 to have their first child — and making their 30s and even 40s their baby-boom years.

This “compositional shift” toward delayed childbearing means fewer births to teens and college-age women, said researchers Brady E. Hamilton and colleagues at the National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS).

It also means fewer births out-of-wedlock since, proportionally, older women have “fewer nonmarital births than their younger counterparts,” they wrote.

The new teen birthrate marked a stunning 61 percent decline from its last peak in 1991.

“This is spectacular news — proof again that teens can, and often do, make good decisions,” said Sarah S. Brown, chief executive of the National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy.

“Perhaps the only good thing about the recent ‘great recession’ is that teens now grasp a simple, tough fact: adolescence must center on education and growing up, not pregnancy and parenthood,” she said. “Reality shows like MTV’s *16 and Pregnant* have also driven this message home, as have the efforts of countless parents and effective programs, coast to coast,” she added.

The NCHS report said that between 2013 and 2014, the birthrate for teens 15-19 dropped by 9 percent, to its new record low of 24.2 births per 1,000 teens.

Both young and old teens contributed to the decline.

The birthrate for high-school-age teens dropped to the very low 10.9 births per 1,000 teens age 15-17, more than 70 percent lower than in 1991, when the rate was 38.7 births per 1,000 teens aged 15-17.

Moreover, in 2014, these school-age teens had 66,788 births, about two-thirds less than in 1991, when this age group had 188,226 babies.

A similar decline was seen among the older teens: In 2014, women aged 18 or 19 gave birth to 182,279 babies and had a birthrate of 43.8 births per 1,000 teens. In 1991, their birthrate was double that — 94.4 births per 1,000 teens aged 18-19 — and 331,351 babies born to these older teen mothers.

Reasons for these declines include sex education that encourages teens to refrain from having sexual intercourse until they graduate high school — or marry; use contraceptives every time they have sex, especially a long-lasting method like the IUD; and keep the number of sex partners to a very small number.

Among college-age women, childbearing has continued to decline and is also at a new record low — 79.0 births per 1,000 women aged 20-24, the NCHS said.

Births were stable for women in their late 20s, while birthrates rose 3 percent for women in their 30s and 2 percent for women in their 40s.

The NCHS report further saw good news about unwed childbearing, reporting a 2014 rate of 44.0 births per 1,000 unmarried women aged 15-44.

This was a 1 percent decline from the previous year and the sixth time the rate fell. It also represented a 15 percent decline from its historical peak in 2007, the researchers said.

Still, the unwed birth numbers meant that 40.3 percent of all 2014 births were out of wedlock — far higher than 10.7 percent of unwed births seen in 1970.