



Teen Pregnancy a Problem in Rural America

Poverty, fewer doctors and clinics, less college enrollment, or just more time on their hands; these are all factors that could be reasons for the higher percentage of teen moms in rural America. A recent study by the National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy shows that the teen birth rate in rural counties is one-third higher than in urban counties. Katherine Jarvis is the replication coordinator for the Nebraska Children's Home Society and says that their service areas see high percentages of teen moms aged 17 and younger.

The study found that the rural teen birth rate across the nation is nearly 44 percent, compared to 32 percent in urban counties. With fewer recreation options, reduced access to clinics, and less college enrollment, the prevalence of pregnancies is far higher in small town USA. Jarvis says when you extend the age of teen girls up by two years to 19, the birth rate increases dramatically.

While the overall teen birth rates have been falling in both rural and urban areas, the rate decrease is much slower in rural counties. Fifty five percent of teens in rural America were found to have ever had intercourse, compared to only 40 percent in metro counties, with many never having used any form of birth control.

The Campaign study also found that that birth rate among girls ages 15-19 was over 66 percent across the nation's Indian reservations.

