

Births to Teens

DEFINITION

Births to teens is the number of births to teen girls ages 15 to 19 per 1,000 teen girls.

SIGNIFICANCE

Teen pregnancy and parenting can impact the development of teen parents as well as their children. Infants of teen parents have higher rates of prematurity, low birthweight, and infant mortality than those born to women in their twenties and thirties.¹ Children of teens have lower academic achievement, have more health issues, and are more likely to have a teen birth themselves compared with children of older mothers.²

There are strong intergenerational links between teen mothers' educational attainment and income and well-being in the next generation.³ Teen mothers are less likely to graduate from high school. Teen girls in foster care are twice as likely as their peers to become pregnant by age 19.⁴

There are disparities in teen birth rates by age, race, and ethnicity. Nationally, most teen births are to teens ages 18 or older. In 2020, 76% of teen births in the United States were to 18- and 19-year-old mothers. The teen birth rate is highest among American Indian or Alaska Native, Black, Hispanic, and Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander adolescents and lowest among Asian adolescents.^{5,6}

Effective teen pregnancy prevention programs address the social determinants of health, and work within the community to support support the health of adolescents. This includes ensuring access to quality reproductive health care and education.⁷ Nationally, fewer teens are having sex and those that are sexually active are more likely to use contraception.^{8,9}

After peaking in 1991, the U.S. teen birth rate has declined almost every year and reached a historic low in 2021. Despite these declines, the U.S. teen birth rate remains higher than in other developed countries.^{10,11,12}

Rhode Island's teen birth rate mirrors national trends, peaking in 1993 at 47.6 per 1,000 and reaching a historic low in 2021 at 7.8 births per 1,000 teen girls.^{13,14} In Rhode Island between 2017-2021, 3.4% (1,791) of babies were born to mothers under age 20.¹⁵

Teen Birth Rates (rate per 1,000 girls ages 15-19)		
	1991	2021
RI	44.7	7.8
US	61.8	13.9
National Rank*		5 th
New England Rank**		5 ^h

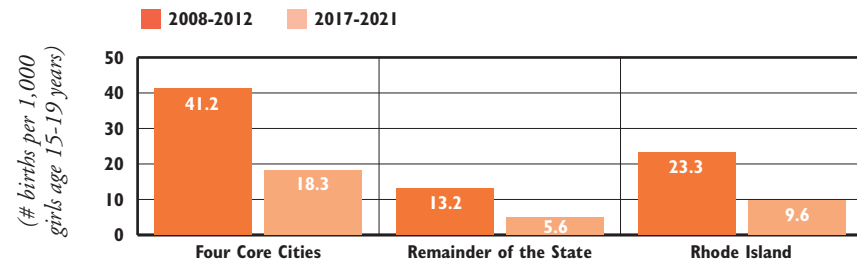
*1st is best; 50th is worst

**1st is best; 6th is worst

Source: For 1991: Ventura, S. J., et al. (2014). National and state patterns of teen births in the United States, 1940-2013. *NVSR*, 63(4), 1-33. For 2021: Osterman, M. J. K., Hamilton, B. E., Martin, J. A., Driscoll, A. K., & Valenzuela, C. (2023). Births: Final data for 2021. *National Vital Statistics Reports*, 72(1), 1-52.



Teen Birth Rates, Rhode Island, Five-Year Average Comparisons: 2008-2012, 2017-2021



Source: Rhode Island Department of Health, Center for Health Data and Analysis, 2008-2021.

- ◆ In 2021, the birth rate for U.S. teens (13.9 births per 1,000 teen girls) was the lowest ever recorded.¹⁶
- ◆ In Rhode Island, the statewide five-year average teen birth rate declined 59% between 2008-2012 and 2017-2021, from 23.3 births per 1,000 teen girls to 9.6 per 1,000. The teen birth rate in the four core cities declined 56% during that time but remains more than three times higher than the remainder of the state.¹⁷
- ◆ Despite declines among all racial and ethnic groups, disparities still exist in teen birth rates.¹⁸ In Rhode Island between 2017 and 2021, the teen birth rates for Hispanic (25.6 per 1,000), Black (14.5 per 1,000), and American Indian/Alaska Native (12.2 per 1,000) teens were higher than the rates of their white (5.5 per 1,000) and Asian (3.6 per 1,000) peers.¹⁹



Repeat Births to Teens, Rhode Island, 2017-2021

AGE	TOTAL NUMBER OF BIRTHS	NUMBER OF REPEAT BIRTHS	PERCENT REPEAT BIRTHS
15-17	430	30	7%
18-19	1,347	190	14%
Total 15-19	1,777	220	12%

Source: Rhode Island Department of Health, Center for Health Data and Analysis, 2016-2020.

- ◆ Nationally, 15% of all births to teens ages 15-19 in 2020 were repeat births.²⁰ To continue to reduce repeat teen births, pregnant and parenting teens should be connected to patient-centered primary care that addresses the needs of young mothers and families.²¹



Teen Birth Rates by Location

◆ In Rhode Island between 2017 and 2021, the rate of births to teens ages 15-19 in the core cities (18.3 per 1,000) was more than three times higher than the remainder of the state (4.9 per 1,000).²²

◆ Thirteen percent of teen births in the core cities were repeat births, while 11% of teen births in the rest of the state were repeat births.²³

◆ Health care providers can play a key role in reducing teen births by integrating comprehensive reproductive health counseling into health care for all women and men of reproductive age to help reduce unintended pregnancies.²⁴

◆ In 2021, 76.6% of Rhode Island high school students reported never having sexual intercourse. Of those who reported that they did, 47% reported using a condom, and 12% used no method to prevent pregnancy the last time they had sexual intercourse.²⁵

◆ Among 15 to 19-year-olds in Rhode Island between 2012 and 2021, the rates of chlamydia have decreased by 8% (1,760 to 1,617 per 100,000) and the rates of gonorrhea have increased by 67% (144 to 241 per 100,000).²⁶

Table 26. Births to Teens, Ages 15-19, Rhode Island, 2017-2021

CITY/TOWN	# OF BIRTHS AGES 15-17	# OF BIRTHS AGES 18-19	# OF BIRTHS AGES 15-19	BIRTH RATE PER 1,000 AGES 15-19
Barrington	0	3	3	*
Bristol	0	5	5	*
Burrillville	2	12	14	6.0 [^]
Central Falls	32	91	123	22.1
Charlestown	0	6	6	*
Coventry	3	16	19	3.1 [^]
Cranston	27	78	105	10.4
Cumberland	3	20	23	3.4
East Greenwich	0	1	1	*
East Providence	10	42	52	14.6
Exeter	0	3	3	*
Foster	1	4	5	*
Glocester	0	1	1	*
Hopkinton	0	7	7	*
Jamestown	0	0	0	*
Johnston	3	15	18	5.3 [^]
Lincoln	5	15	20	5.8 [^]
Little Compton	0	0	0	0.0
Middletown	0	7	7	*
Narragansett	2	1	3	*
New Shoreham	0	0	0	0.0
Newport	13	37	50	8.3
North Kingstown	4	14	18	4.1 [^]
North Providence	11	27	38	7.0
North Smithfield	1	3	4	*
Pawtucket	38	134	172	17.7
Portsmouth	2	3	5	*
Providence	200	510	710	16.1
Richmond	1	1	2	*
Scituate	4	5	9	5.4 [^]
Smithfield	2	4	6	*
South Kingstown	1	9	10	0.6 [^]
Tiverton	2	9	11	9.7 [^]
Warren	2	7	9	10.5 [^]
Warwick	9	52	61	6.3
West Greenwich	0	1	1	*
West Warwick	12	41	53	14.8
Westerly	3	16	19	9.2
Woonsocket	35	138	173	33.5
Unknown	2	9	11	*
Four Core Cities	305	873	1,178	18.3
Remainder of State	125	474	599	4.9
Rhode Island	430	1,347	1,777	9.4

Source of Data for Table/Methodology

Rhode Island Department of Health, Center for Health Data and Analysis, Maternal and Child Health Database, 2017-2021.

* The data are statistically unreliable and rates are not reported and should not be calculated.

[^] The data are statistically unstable and rates or percentages should be interpreted with caution.

The denominators for girls ages 15 to 19 are from CDC Wonder Database, 1-year estimate for race/ethnicity and American Community Survey RI 5-year estimates for city/towns

Births to teens ages 14 and younger are collected by the Rhode Island Department of Health but are not reported in the Factbook.

Core cities are Central Falls, Pawtucket, Providence, and Woonsocket.

References

¹ March of Dimes. (2012). *Teenage pregnancy*.

^{2,4,8,12} Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2021). *About teen pregnancy*.

^{3,5,9,18,20} U.S. Department of Health & Human Services Office of Adolescent Health. (n.d.). *Trends in teen pregnancy and childbearing*.

^{6,11} *Teen Birth Trends: In Brief* (2020). Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service.

^{10,16} Martin, J. A., Hamilton, B. E., & Osterman, M. J. K.. (2022). Births: in the United States, 2021. *NCHS Data Brief, no 442*. Hyattsville, MD: National Center for Health Statistics.

⁷ Office of Population Affairs. (n.d.). *About the teen pregnancy prevention program*.

¹³ Ventura, S. J., Hamilton, B. E. & Mathews, T.J. (2014). National and state patterns of teen births in the United States, 1940-2013. *National Vital Statistics Reports, 63(4)*, 1-33.

¹⁴ Osterman, M. J. K., Hamilton, B. E., Martin, J. A., Driscoll, A. K., & Valenzuela, C. (2023). Births: Final data for 2021. *National Vital Statistics Reports, 72(1)*, 1-52.

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