

HEALTHY PEOPLE 2020

CRITICAL INDICATORS FOR ADOLESCENTS AND YOUNG ADULTS



Pregnancy rates among adolescent females, aged 15–19

Overview

In 2008, teenage pregnancy rates in the United States reached their lowest level in 40 years at 67.8 per 1,000 women aged 15–19. However, these rates are among the highest in the western industrialized world.^{1,2}

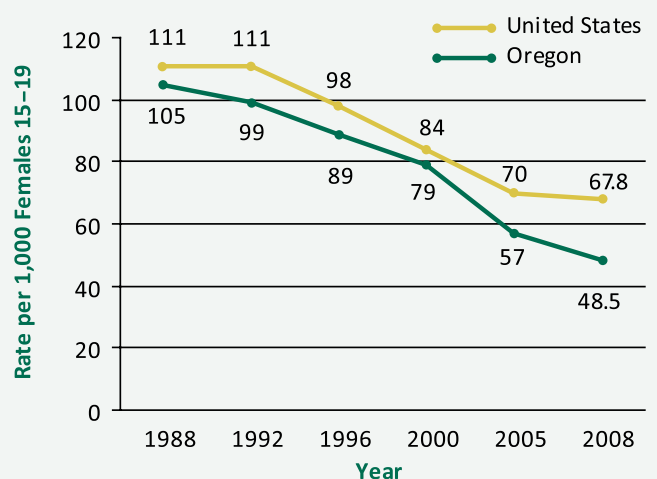
Teen pregnancy is connected to wider societal issues such as poverty, discrimination, and lack of family and community support systems. It is important for these risk factors to be addressed through policies and programs that provide youth with accurate information, skill-building opportunities and access to youth-friendly health care.

Teen pregnancy in Oregon

In 2008, the most recent year for national-level data, Oregon's teen pregnancy rate was 48.5/1000, 30 percent lower than the national rate of 67.8/1,000.⁴

In 2009, Oregon's teen pregnancy rate was 45.2/1,000 females.³

Figure 2
Teen pregnancy rates in Oregon versus United States, select years



Source: The Guttmacher Institute, 2012

Why is teen pregnancy prevention important?

Preventing unintended teen pregnancies contributes to the overall health and well-being of adolescents. Adolescents who delay having children are more likely to finish high school, have higher academic attainment and have a greater potential for economic success later in life than pregnant or parenting teens.⁵

There are economic incentives for taxpayers when unintended teenage pregnancies are prevented. In 2008, publicly funded medical and social services associated with teen childbearing cost U.S. and Oregon taxpayers approximately \$5.1 billion and \$63 million, respectively.⁶

Policymakers

Comprehensive sexual health education is an effective way to promote positive behavior change and help youth make healthy decisions regarding sexual behaviors.^{7,8} In 2009 the Oregon Legislature passed House Bill 2509, mandating that each public school district provide age-appropriate human sexuality education as part of the health education curricula.⁹ The law requires that sexuality education must:

- Be medically accurate;
- Be comprehensive; and
- Include information on how to reduce the risk of unintended pregnancies and acquiring sexually transmitted infections (STIs), including the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV).

Policymakers can support the implementation of comprehensive sexual health education by holding schools accountable for the curricula.



Confidential, youth-friendly health care services increase the acceptability of the services and the willingness of adolescents to seek them, especially for issues related to sexual behavior and reproductive health.¹⁰ Policymakers can work to ensure that youth in their communities have access to health care by advocating for School-Based Health Centers, school clinics or the presence of school nurses. They can also encourage and support physicians and nurses in the community to participate in ongoing training related to adolescent health care.

For more information, go to healthoregon.org/ysh to view the Oregon Youth Sexual Health Plan, which provides a framework to help guide local policymaking decisions regarding youth sexual behavior.

Parents and guardians

Parents and guardians should be a primary information resource when it comes to their youths' sexual health. There are many resources available that can help parents and guardians start the conversation with children and youth of all ages, including:

- "There's No Place Like Home . . . for Sexual Education" is a website developed by Planned Parenthood of Southwestern Oregon. It provides parents and guardians age-appropriate ways to discuss sexual health with children ages 3–18 (available at www.noplacelikehome.org/index.php).
- The National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy provides a comprehensive view on how to talk with adolescents and young adults about sexual health (available at www.thenationalcampaign.org/parents/relationships.aspx).



Youth

Approximately 47 percent of 11th-grade students in Oregon reported ever having sexual intercourse.¹¹ It is important that all youth have the knowledge and resources to practice safer sex if and when they become sexually active. Specifically, youth should be able to:

- Seek sexual and reproductive health information and services within their communities before deciding to become sexually active;
- Develop effective communication and negotiation skills to express sexual health decisions to partners;
- Develop short- and long-term goals that will help support their sexual health and avoid unintended pregnancy and STIs;
- Describe contraceptive methods, including their proper use and effectiveness, to prevent pregnancy and reduce disease.

Local activities

Communities throughout Oregon are implementing programs that aim to reduce unintended pregnancies among teenagers.

- The Oregon Department of Human Services supports My Future-My Choice, a comprehensive sexuality education curriculum provided by adults and peer educators in middle-school classrooms in 20 Oregon counties.
- The Oregon Health Authority's Public Health Division supports *¡Cuidate!*, a culturally specific and evidence-based HIV risk reduction curriculum for Latino youth, being implemented in select counties across Oregon. *¡Cuidate!* supports behaviors to prevent STIs and unintended pregnancies.
- Oregon's two Planned Parenthood affiliates are implementing the Teen Outreach Program® (TOP) in Jackson, Marion and Multnomah counties. TOP is an evidence-based, teen-pregnancy prevention program that encourages positive youth development by engaging youth in service learning projects.
- The Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde are in the planning stages of a federally supported teen pregnancy prevention program.



Resources

Oregon Youth Sexual Health Plan (healthoregon.org/ysh) is a guide for program planning, policy and funding decisions, and stakeholder education to support the sexual health of Oregon's youth.

Oregon Contraceptive Care (healthoregon.org/ccare) provides low-cost or no-cost birth control services in locations throughout the state.

Preventing Pregnancy – What Works (www.itsyoursexlife.com/preventing-pregnancy/what-works-what-doesnt) has information on the effectiveness of different birth control methods.

211info (211info.org) is a regional toll-free, health and social service helpline. Referrals for most health care needs, including reproductive health services, vaccine information and STI testing are available. Call 1-800-723-3638 or go to the 211info website.

The National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy (www.thenationalcampaign.org/parents/relationships.aspx) provides helpful information about how to talk with adolescents and young adults about sexual health.

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