The National Campaign
to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy

Fast Facts

How is the 3 in 10 Statistic Calculated?

When The National Campaign was formed in 1996, it was true that more than 4 out of 10 girls became pregnant at least once before age 20. Over time this percentage decreased, so that it was characterized as "about 4 in 10," then "nearly 4 in 10," and now has decreased to approximately 3 in 10. However, for some racial/ethnic groups, notably African American and Latina teens, the likelihood of becoming pregnant at least one time as a teenager is much greater. In fact, 50% of African American teen girls and 52% of Latina teens become pregnant at least once before their 20th birthday.

How this statistic is estimated may not be obvious, so this fact sheet explains the methods and data used to calculate it. Note that the way that the statistic is calculated is the same regardless of race/ethnicity, but the numbers are quite different. For more specific information about the pregnancy and birth rates for all racial/ethnic groups in the United States please refer to The National Campaign website, National Data section (*http://www.TheNationalCampaign.org/national-data/teen-pregnancy-birth-rates.aspx*)

How does the 3 in 10 statistic differ from the usual pregnancy rate?

The typical teen pregnancy rate measures a teen's risk of pregnancy in a single year. For example, the most recent teen pregnancy rate (from 2006) is 71.5 per 1,000, which means that for every 1,000 girls aged 15-19 in 2004, 71.5 experienced a pregnancy that year (or 7.15%).[1] The 3 in 10 statistic differs from a typical rate in that it measures *cumulative* risk of teen pregnancy over a teen girl's life up to age 20, as opposed to the risk of pregnancy in a single year.

How is the 3 in 10 statistic calculated?

Basically, the 3 in 10 statistic is calculated by applying the relevant age-specific pregnancy rate to a hypothetical group of teens each year as they age through the teen years up to age 20.

TABLE 1. Pregnancy Rates, 2006

Age	Rate per 1,000[1]	Percent (Rate per 100) [column 2 ÷ 10]
Under 15	3.1	0.31%
15-17	38.9	3.89%
18-19	122.3	12.23%

TABLE 2. Proportion of Teen Girls Who Become Pregnant, at Each Year and Cumulatively, Without Adjusting for Subsequent Pregnancies

Age	Percent Pregnant That Year	Percent Pregnant, Cumulative
14	0.31%	0.31%
15	3.89%	4.20%
16	3.89%	8.09%
17	3.89%	11.98%
18	12.23%	24.21%
19	12.23%	36.44%

Then, some of the pregnancies are subtracted at each age, to account for the fact that some girls become pregnant more than once as a teen, and the 3 in 10 statistic measures the proportion of teen girls who become pregnant at least once before age 20.

We begin by gathering the most recent teen pregnancy rates, which as of February 2011, are for 2006 and are published by the Guttmacher Institute (Table 1). These rates are then converted to percents by dividing each rate by 1,000.

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February 2011
(202) 478-8500
PAGE 1

Next, we apply these pregnancy rates to a group of teen girls at each age through age 19 (Table 2). We begin with age 14, as the under 15 pregnancy rate from the Guttmacher Institute uses women age 14-year-old population as the denominator for the pregnancy rate for teens under age 15. At age 14, the risk of pregnancy is equal to the rate for girls under 15. At ages 15, 16, and 17, the risk of pregnancy is equal to the rate for girls aged 15-17, and at ages 18 and 19 the risk of pregnancy is equal to the rate for girls 18-19. The sum of the percent pregnant at each year, ages 14-19, equals the gross cumulative proportion of girls who become pregnant as a teen. However, at this point we are overstating the proportion because we are assuming that each pregnancy occurs to a different teen, when in fact some teens become pregnant more than once during the teen years.

Next we need to determine what proportion of pregnancies are subsequent pregnancies. As the proportion of teen births that are subsequent is readily available from NCHS[2], but the proportions of teen abortions and miscarriages that are subsequent are not available, we use the proportion of teen births that are subsequent to estimate the proportion of all pregnancies that are subsequent (Table 3).

Finally, we need to extend the calculations in Table 2 by subtracting the proportion of pregnancies that are subsequent

TABLE 3. Number of teen births by birth order, 2006[2]

	15-17	18-19
First births	124,539	223,944
Subsequent births	13,743	71,137
Order not stated	661	1,412
Total births	138,943	296,493
% subsequent (of those with known birth order)	9.9%	24.1%

from the percent pregnant each year (Table 4). After subtracting subsequent pregnancies, the net result is that **29.38%** of girls become pregnant at least once as a teen, which can also be said as approximately 3 in 10.

SOURCES:

1. Kost, K., Henshaw, S., & Carlin, L. (2010). *U.S. Teenage Pregnancies, Births and Abortions: National and State Trends and Trends by Race and Ethnicity*. Retrieved January 2010, from *http://www.guttmacher.org/pubs/USTPtrends.pdf*.

2. Martin. J.A., Hamilton, B.E., Sutton, P.D., Ventura, S.J., Menacker, F., and Kirmeyer (2009). Births: Final data for 2006. *National Vital Statistics Reports, 57* (7)

TABLE 4. Proportion of Teen Girls Who Become Pregnant, at Each Year and Cumulatively, Adjusted for Subsequent Pregnancies

Age	Percent Pregnant That Year (Column B)	Proportion of Those Pregnancies That Are Subsequent (Column C)	Percent Pregnant for the First Time That Year Column D = [col. B- ((col. B x col. C)/100)]	Percent Pregnant for the First Time, Cumulative Column E
14	0.31%	1.7%	0.30%	0.30%
15	3.89%	9.9%	3.50%	3.81%
16	3.89%	9.9%	3.50%	7.31%
17	3.89%	9.9%	3.50%	10.82%
18	12.23%	24.1%	9.28%	20.10%
19	12.23%	24.1%	9.28%	**29.38%**

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February 2011
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PAGE 2