



## Context:

# Teen Births in the United States

Teen pregnancy and birth rates in the United States have fallen steadily since the early 1990s, when nearly a decade of steady and substantial increases in the rates came to an end. In 1991, more than one million adolescent girls became pregnant and more than half a million had a birth. Of every 1,000 girls aged 15-19 in 1991, 116 became pregnant and 62 had a birth.

Now, after more than a decade of decline, the teen birth rate is a third lower than in 1991. Instead of 62 births for every 1,000 15-19 year old girls, there are just 41 (Martin, et al).

Still, despite the very substantial progress in reducing the teen birth rate since 1991, the United States' rates of adolescent pregnancy and childbearing are still conspicuously different from other countries that share our level of income and eco-

conomic development and are even higher than countries with far lower average incomes. One study compared the United States to 45 developed countries—from Albania to Yugoslavia—as of the late 1990s (Singh and Darroch). Of these 45 countries, just one had a higher teen fertility rate—Armenia, which barely nosed out the United States. In much of Europe, teen birth rates were one-quarter to one-fifth of the rate in the United States. Denmark, France, Germany, Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Sweden and Switzerland are just some of the many European countries with teen birth rates a fraction of our own. Our close neighbor Canada has a teen birth rate less than half the U.S. rate. Clearly, despite the country's substantial progress, there is still much room for improvement. For example, the National Campaign estimates that nearly one-third of young women in the United States become pregnant by age 20.