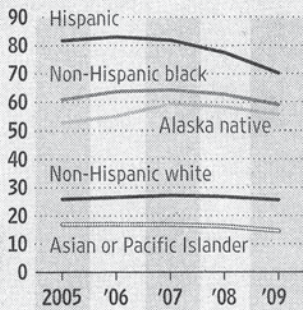


WALL STREET JOURNAL

Birth Wait

U.S. birth rates per 1,000 females aged 15-19 are falling



All races and origins:

40.5 41.9 42.5 41.5 39.1

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention



Associated Press

Shayna Knowles with students at St. Andrew's Episcopal Church in Lake Worth, Fla. Years of sex education likely helped lower the teen birth rate.

Teen Births Hit Low in Hard Times

By MIKE ESTERL

The birth rate among U.S. teenagers fell to a record low in 2009, and some experts attributed the decline to the recession.

The overall birth rate in the U.S. dropped 4% to a historic low last year, to 13.5 per 1,000 people from 14.0 in 2008, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said Tuesday. But a steeper decline occurred among those 15 to 19 years old, with the rate falling 6% to 39.1 births per 1,000 females in that age group, the lowest in seven decades of tracking. Rates among teens of all ages, races and ethnic groups also hit record lows in 2009.

Researchers cautioned that it was too early to draw hard con-

clusions about the declines. Much of the data that could shed further light, including the use of contraceptives, is still being gathered for the most recent calendar year.

But some think the weak economy may have accelerated the broad trend, with many would-be mothers anxious about the cost of raising a child and about high unemployment.

"This decline may be seen more in delayed births for many women than foregone births," said Brady Hamilton, a statistician at the CDC's National Center for Health Statistics who helped write the report.

In a study published in April, the Pew Research Center said it had found strong correlations in

many U.S. states between falling birth rates in 2008 and declining per capita income and housing prices.

The birth rate among 15- to 19-year-olds dropped a more modest 2% in 2008, reversing two straight years of increases. The 2009 rate is 37% lower than the high-water mark of 61.8 births per 1,000 in 1991 among that age group, the CDC said.

"They see parents who have lost jobs or houses. They're very aware of how tough it is now, and I think that causes teens to be more cautious," said Sarah Brown, chief executive of the National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy.

Years of education programs aimed at reducing U.S. teen preg-

nancies also likely helped bring down births, even though rates remain higher than in many other developed countries, according to experts.

The U.S. birth rate in 2009 among Hispanic teens, at 70.1 per 1,000, far surpassed rates among non-Hispanic whites and non-Hispanic blacks, at 25.6 and 59.0, respectively. But the birth rate among Hispanic teens also fell more sharply from 2008, by 10%, than among other groups, according to the CDC.

The only age group to see a rise in the U.S. birth rate last year was women 40 to 44. The rate rose 3% from 2008 to 10.1 per 1,000 women in that age group, the highest rate since 1967.