



FACT SHEET

Teen Sexual Activity, Pregnancy, and Childbearing Among Native Americans

DECEMBER 2007

Highlights:

- Compared to the national average, Native American high school students are more likely to have had sexual intercourse.
- The teen birth rate for Native Americans is higher than the national average.
- Between 1990 and 2005, the Native American teen birth rate decreased in all but one of the states where data was available. Overall the teen birth rate decreased 35 percent among Native American Teens during the same time period.



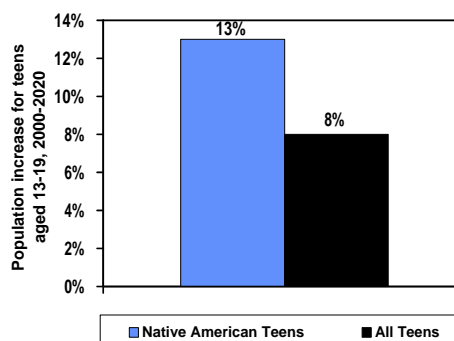
Native Americans and the U.S. Population

According to the 2000 Census, 1.5% of the U.S. population is of American Indian or Alaska Native descent.¹ In 2004, 203,227 girls between the ages of 15 and 19 were of Native American descent, approximately 2% of all 15- to 19-year-old girls.²

The Native American population is concentrated in the western region of the United States, with 43% of Native Americans living in the West. More than 60% of all Native Americans live in the following eleven states: California, Oklahoma, Arizona, Texas, New Mexico, New York, Washington, North Carolina, Michigan, Alaska and Florida.¹ About three quarters people who identified themselves as Native American reported being affiliated with a particular tribe or tribes. The five largest tribal groupings of American Indians according to the 2000 Census were Cherokee, Navajo, Latin American Indian, Choctaw, and Sioux, and the four largest Alaska Native tribes were Eskimo, Tlingit-Haida, Alaska Athabaskan, and Aleut.¹

From 2000 to 2020, the Native American population is projected to increase to 3.1 million. The growth rate of the Native American teen population is greater than that of the overall teen population — between 2000 and 2020 the Native American population of 13- to 19-year-olds will grow 13% while the overall 13- to 19-year-old population will increase by 8% (Figure 1).²

Figure 1: The growth of the Native American teen population between 2000 and 2020 is expected to be greater than that of the overall U.S. teen population during those same years.²





Native American Teen Pregnancy Rates

Teen pregnancy rates for Native American youth are not available from any of the three national pregnancy data sets. This is most likely due to a lack of available abortion data (the pregnancy rate includes all pregnancies – those ending birth, abortion, and miscarriage).

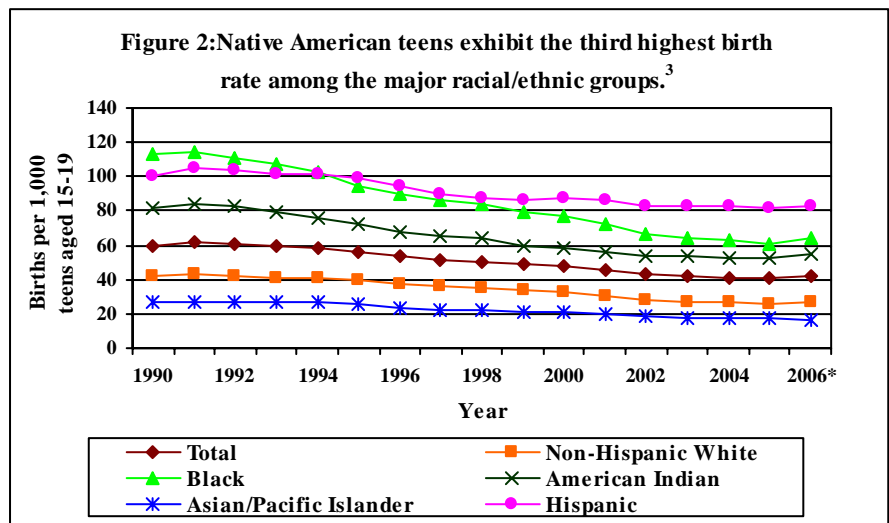


Native American Teen Birth Rates

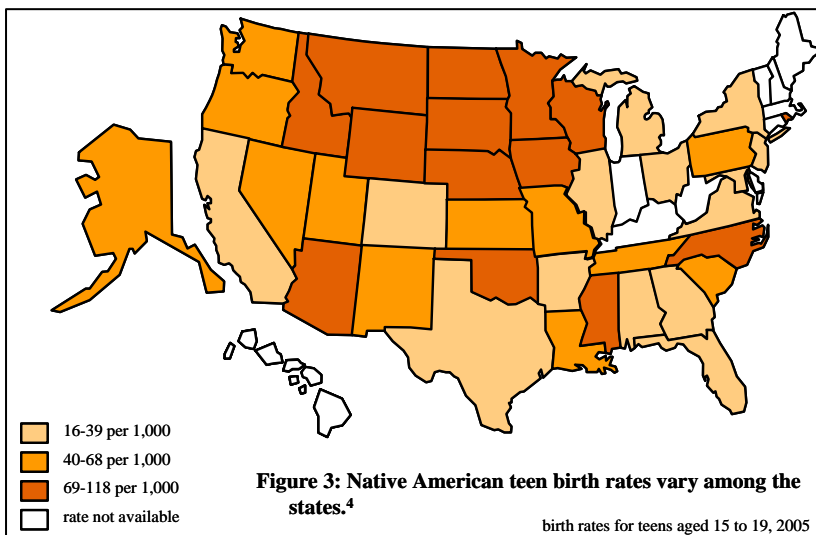
In 2006, the preliminary birth rate for Native American 15- to 19- year-olds is 54.7 per 1,000, up 2% from 52.7 in 2005 and higher than national birth rate of 41.9 per 1,000 (Figure 2).³

Native American teen birth rates vary substantially from state to state: for the 40 states with Native American populations large enough to calculate birth rates in 2005, birth rates for teens aged 15 to 19 ranged from 16 per 1,000 in Illinois and New Jersey to 118 per 1,000 in Nebraska (Figure 3).⁴

Birth rates for Native American teens fell 35% between 1991 and 2006, from



* Data for 2006 are preliminary



84.1 per 1,000 to 54.7 per 1,000. This percent change was more than the overall percent decline in birth rate for 15- to 19-year-old girls in the U.S. over the same period of time (32%).⁴

Of the 21 states for which there are data available for both 1990 and 2005, rates declined in 20 states; declines ranged from 8% in Oklahoma to 63% in California. The teen birth rate for Native Americans increased for one state during this time period, Kansas, by 34% (Figure 4).⁴

The majority of Native American teen mothers give birth out-of-wedlock. In 2005, 90% of Native American teens aged 15 to 19 who gave birth were unmarried (Figure 5). This is slightly higher than the proportion of all teen mothers who give birth out of wedlock (84.4 %).³



Sexual Activity and Contraceptive Use

Because Native American youth make up such a small proportion of the overall teen population, surveys measuring teen sexual activity and contraceptive use typically do not include enough Native Americans to calculate reliable statistics.

However, in 2001 the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) used the questionnaire from the Youth Risk Behavior Survey, a national survey that includes questions about sexual activity, to conduct a nationally-representative survey of the

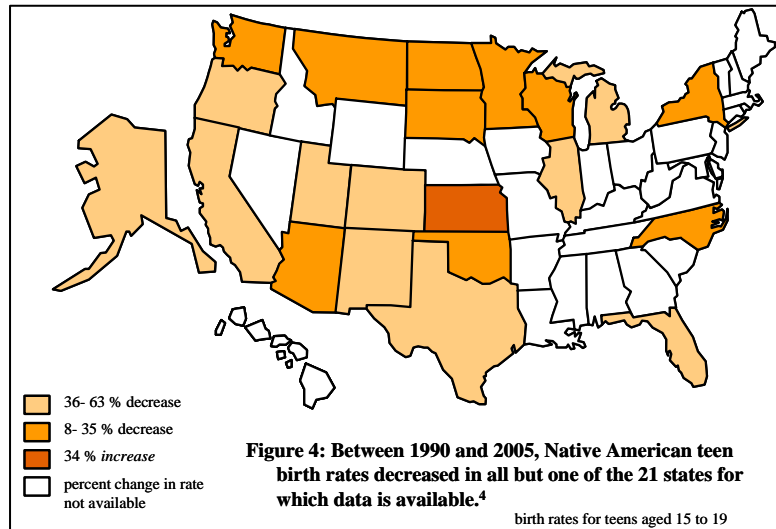
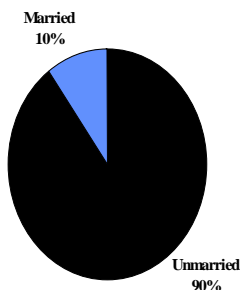


Figure 5: The majority of Native American teen mothers are unmarried.³



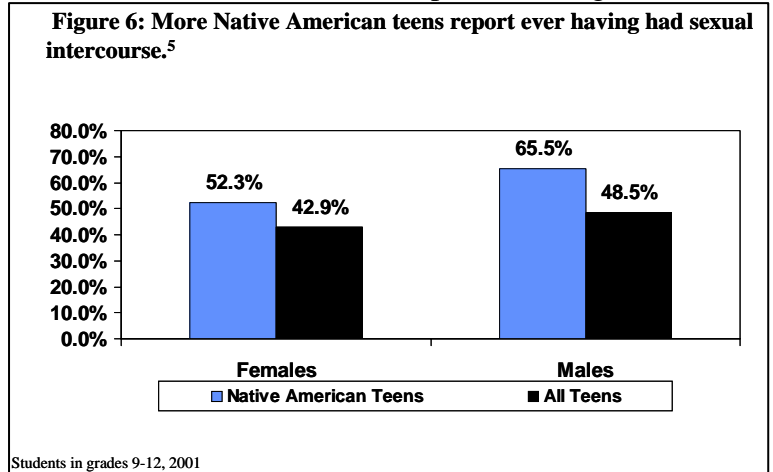
Native American teen mothers aged 15 to 19, 2005

approximately 8,500 high school students attending schools that the BIA funds.⁵ While data from this survey is the best data currently available on Native American teens' sexual behavior, one should note that the vast majority of teens who self-identify as Native American do not attend BIA-funded schools, and the behavior of those that do and do not attend BIA-funded schools may be quite different.

Compared to national rates of sexual activity from the Youth Risk Behavior Survey, youth attending BIA-funded schools are more likely to have had sex. Slightly more than half (52.3%) of Native American female teens in high school reported having had sex, compared to 42.9% of all female teens in high school, and 65.5% Native American male students reported having

of all female teens in high school, and 65.5% Native American male students reported having had sex, compared to the 48.5% of all male high school students (Figure 6).⁵ The number of students attending BIA-funded schools that reported having had sexual intercourse decreased from 66.7% in 1994 to 58.7% in 2001.⁵

Condom use at last sex is lower among female Native American students than among the total student population (45.0% vs. 51.3%). Among males, however, condom use at last sex is equally likely among Native American students and the general high school male population (64.8% vs. 65.1%) (Figure 7).⁵ Overall, 55.9% of sexually experienced students attending BIA-funded schools in 2001 reported using a condom at last sex, up from 47.4% in 1994.⁵ Birth control pill



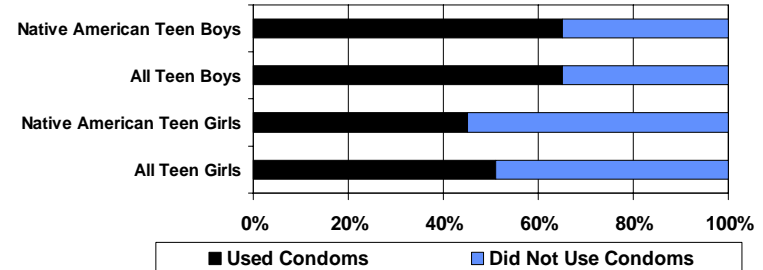
use is also lower among Native American students than among the general student population. Only 8.3% of Native American students report using birth control pills before their last sexual intercourse, compared to 18.2% of all high school students.⁵



Navajo Nation

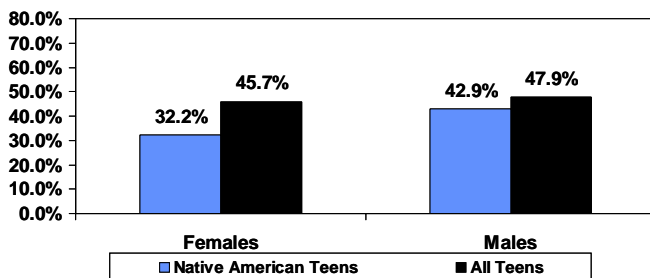
The Navajo Nation is comprised of approximately 225,000 members, the largest federally recognized Indian tribe in the United States¹. Their land consists of 16.2 million acres, occupying all of northeastern Arizona, New Mexico, and extending into Utah.

Figure 7: Native American female students are less likely than the general high school population to have used a condom at most recent sex.⁵



Students in grades 9-12, 2001

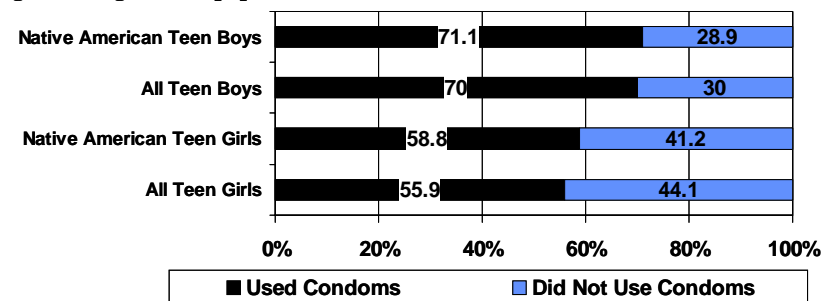
Figure 8: Less American Navajo teens report ever having had sexual intercourse.⁵



Compared to national rates of sexual activity from the 2005 Youth Risk Behavior Survey, Navajo youth are less likely to have had sex. Slightly more than one-third (32.2%) of Navajo teen girls in high school reported having had sex, compared to 45.7% of all teen girls in high school, and 42.9% Navajo teen boys reported having had sex, compared to the 47.9% of all teen boys in high school (Figure 8).⁵ Overall, 37.4% of Navajo youth in 2007 report having had sex compared to 46.8% of all teens.

Navajo teenage boys were slightly more likely to use a condom at last sex than among the total male student population (71.1% vs. 70.0%). Navajo teen girls were also more likely to use condom at last sex the general high school female population (58.8% vs. 55.9%) (Figure 9).⁵

Figure 9: Navajo Nation male students are slightly more likely than the general high school population to have used a condom at most recent sex.⁵



Students in grades 9-12, 2005

NOTES

1. Ogunwole, Stella U. (2002). The American Indian and Alaska Native Population: 2000. *Census 2000 Brief*, 03-06. Note: in statistics from the federal government, race and ethnicity are usually treated separately. In a change from previous Census surveys, the 2000 Census allowed the option of choosing more than one race; the figure in this fact sheet represents all those indicating that they are Native American, whether or not they also chose other races.
2. Day, J.C. (1996). Population projections of the United States by age, sex, race, and Hispanic origin: 1995 to 2050. Current Population Reports, P25-1130. Available online at www.census.gov/prod/1/pop/p25-1130/.
3. Hamilton, B.E., Ventura, S.J., & Martin, J.A.. (2007). Preliminary Births for 2006. NCHS *Health E-Stats* retrieved December 12, 2007 from <http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/products/pubs/pubd/nvsr/nvsr.htm#vol56>; Martin, J.A., Hamilton, B.E., Sutton, P.D., Ventura, S.J., Menacker, F., Munson, M.L., & Munson, M.L. (2005). Births: Final data for 2005. *National Vital Statistics Reports*: 56 (6).
4. Sutton, P.D., & Mathews, T.J. (2004). Trends in characteristics of births by state: United States, 1990, 1995, and 2000-2002. *National Vital Statistics Reports*, 52(19). Available: www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/nvsr/nvsr52/nvsr52_19.pdf; Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. National Center for Health Statistics. VitalStats. <http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/vitalstats.htm> [December 2007]
5. Office of Indian Education Programs, Bureau of Indian Affairs. (n.d.) *2001 Youth risk behavior survey of high school students attending Bureau funded schools*. Available: www.oiep.bia.edu/docs/hsyrbs_2001.pdf. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2002, June 28). Youth risk behavior surveillance – United States, 2001. *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report*, 51(SS-4); National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion (2007). Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System: 2005 Sexual Behaviors Navajo Nations.