

Fast Facts

Unplanned Pregnancy Among 20-Somethings

Key Facts

- Half of all pregnancies are unplanned.* Of the 6.4 million U.S. pregnancies in 2001 (the most recent year for which we have adequate data), over 3 million were unplanned.¹
 - Three-quarters of unplanned pregnancies (2.3 million) were to women 29 and younger.¹
 - More than one-third of unplanned pregnancies (1.1 million) were to unmarried women in their 20s.¹
- The 1.1 million unplanned pregnancies in 2001 to unmarried women in their 20s accounted for:
 - Nearly half (590,000) of the 1.3 million abortions that year.¹
 - Nearly one-third (412,000) of the 1.3 million nonmarital births that year.¹
- Seven in ten pregnancies to unmarried women in their 20s are unplanned.¹
- Unplanned pregnancy to unmarried women in their 20s is widespread, crossing income, education, and racial boundaries.
 - Nearly half (44%) of these pregnancies occur to women who are white, about one-fifth to women who are Hispanic, and almost one-third to women who are black.¹
 - Two-thirds of unmarried women in their 20s having an unplanned pregnancy live above the poverty level and 40% have at least some college education.¹
- Even so, unplanned pregnancy rates are higher for minority women, lower income women, and women with limited education.²

Key Consequences

- Unplanned pregnancy lies behind the vast majority of abortions.¹
- Unplanned pregnancy reduces the opportunity for healthy maternal behavior such as:
 - Preconception care³
 - Optimum child spacing
- Children born as the result of an unplanned pregnancy are more likely** to be born to unmarried mothers, including cohabiting couples who split up shortly thereafter.⁴
 - Nearly one-third are born to mothers who are neither married nor cohabiting.⁴
 - By age 2, over 40% of children born from an unplanned pregnancy live with mothers who are neither married nor cohabiting.⁴
- Unplanned pregnancy is closely linked** to:
 - Later entry into prenatal care⁵
 - Lower likelihood of breastfeeding⁶

* Unplanned pregnancies (also known as "unintended" pregnancies) include those reported by woman to be unwanted or mistimed.

** After controlling for a wide variety of background characteristics

- Children born as the result of an unplanned pregnancy are at greater risk** of:
 - low birthweight and preterm birth, both of which increase the likelihood of infant mortality;⁷
 - having mothers and fathers who suffer from depression and relationship conflict;⁴ and
 - lower cognitive scores on a range of measures in early childhood.⁷

Sources

1. Special tabulations of data from Finer and Henshaw (2006). Disparities in Rates of Unintended Pregnancy in the United States, 1994 and 2001, *Perspectives on Sexual and Reproductive Health*, 38(2):90-96
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4. Child Trends Inc. (2007). Unpublished analysis of Early Childhood Longitudinal Study Birth Cohort data on pregnancy intention and parental relationship outcomes. Washington, DC: Child Trends, Inc.
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