

Why It Matters



The Costs of Teen Childbearing

Teen childbearing is associated with negative consequences for teen mothers, fathers, and their children. In addition to the many personal and social costs, teen childbearing is also costly to the public sector—federal, state and local governments, and the taxpayers who support them.¹

- In 2004, teen childbearing in the United States cost taxpayers at least \$9.1 billion, an average of \$1,430 per teen mother annually.
- The public sector costs of young teens (17 and younger) having children is particularly expensive. These births account for \$8.6 billion of costs, an average of \$4,080 per teen mother annually.
- Most of the costs of teen childbearing are associated with negative consequences for the children of teen mothers, including \$1.9 billion for public sector health care costs, \$2.3 billion for increased child welfare costs, \$2.1 billion for increased costs for state prison systems, and \$2.9 billion in lost revenue due to lower taxes paid by the children of teen mothers over their own adult lifetimes.

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- Between 1991 and 2004, there were nearly 6.8 million teen births in the United States. The estimated cumulative costs during this time period were \$161 billion.

If the teen birth rate had not decreased by one-third between 1991 and 2004, teen childbearing would have cost \$15.8 billion in 2004 rather than \$9.1 billion.

- Due to a dramatic decline in the teen birth rate between 1991 and 2004, taxpayers saved an estimated \$6.7 billion in 2004 alone. Put another way, if the teen birth rate had not decreased by one-third between 1991 and 2004, teen childbearing would have cost \$15.8 billion in 2004 rather than \$9.1 billion.
- Visit www.teenpregnancy.org/costs for state-specific information about the costs of teen childbearing.

Making further progress in reducing teen pregnancy will benefit national and state economies as well as improve the educational, health, and social prospects for this generation of young people and the next. Despite the impressive strides that have been made in reducing teen pregnancy and childbearing in the United States, there is still much work to be done. These cost data make a powerful case for investing additional resources, attention, and effort in reducing teen pregnancy. Sustained progress in reducing teen pregnancy and childbearing, will not only improve the well-being of children, families, and communities, but will also reduce the burden on taxpayers, thereby freeing up funds that could be invested in other priority areas as policymakers see fit.

SOURCES

1. Hoffman, S.D., *By the Numbers: The Public Costs of Adolescent Childbearing*. 2006, The National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy Washington, DC.