
7-2023

Data Brief—Adolescent Mothers: From Cautionary Tales to Partners

Nay Alhelou
Population Council

Follow this and additional works at: https://knowledgecommons.popcouncil.org/focus_adolescents

How does access to this work benefit you? Let us know!

Recommended Citation

Alhelou, Nay. 2023. "Adolescent Mothers: From Cautionary Tales to Partners," Girls Deliver Pre-Conference on Adolescent Girls Data Brief. New York: Population Council.

This Brief is brought to you for free and open access by the Population Council.



Girls Deliver

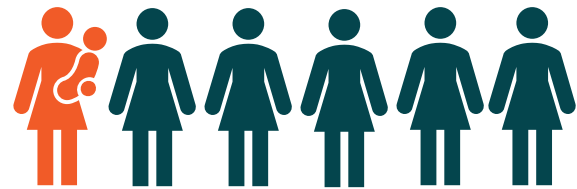
PRE-CONFERENCE ON ADOLESCENT GIRLS
KIGALI, RWANDA • 16 JULY 2023

ROUNDTABLE SESSION DATA BRIEF

ADOLESCENT MOTHERS: FROM CAUTIONARY TALES TO PARTNERS

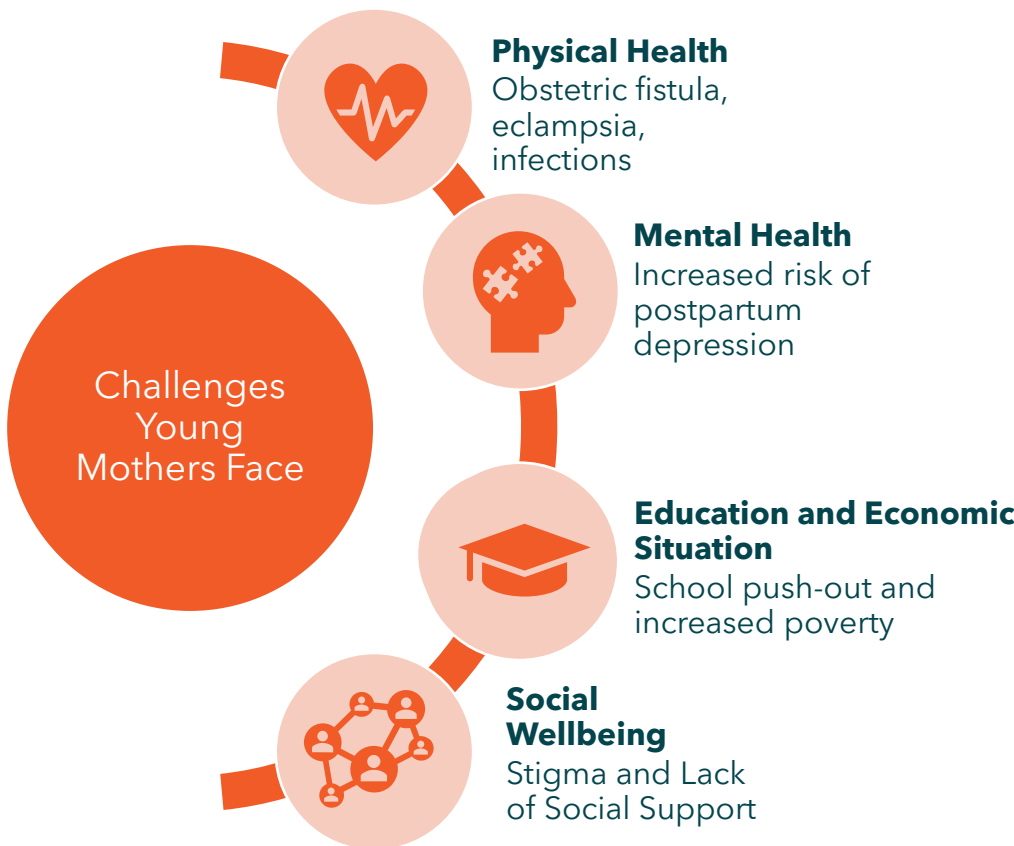
Every year, approximately **21 million** girls aged 15-19 become pregnant and **12 million** of them give birth in low- and middle-income countries.

Despite the rate of adolescent childbearing decreasing over time, the highest rates continue to be in sub-Saharan Africa with a rate of 101 per 1000 women.



Globally, approximately **1 in 6** young women give birth before their 18th birthday.

Adolescent mothers face discrimination and violence - from communities, service providers and families - causing unique challenges and higher risks than their older counterparts.



The children of teenage mothers are more likely to face several challenges:

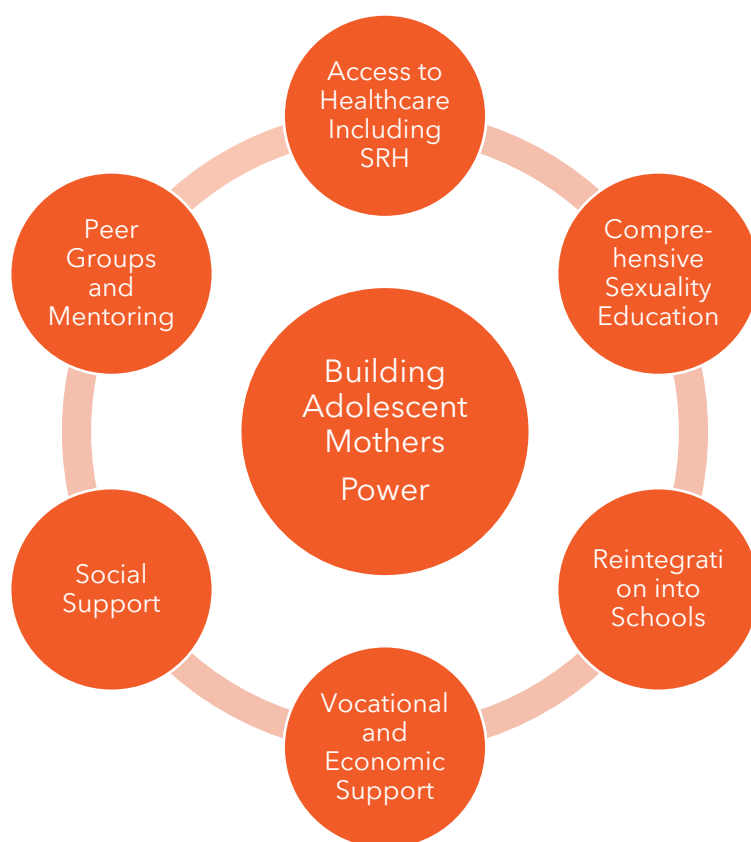
- Higher preterm birth and mortality rates
- Stunted growth
- Potential developmental delays
- Slower language development
- Lower school enrollment

Despite the challenges they face, the futures of adolescent mothers and their children are **not set in stone**.

When provided with opportunities, education, services and support, adolescent mothers can overcome the obstacles they face and improve their own and their children's outcomes.

Adolescent mothers are agents in their personal lives, societies, and the world.

As the people closest to the problems they face and those with a deep commitment to their children, **young mothers are best positioned** to understand what solutions will work to address these challenges.



In 2022, dialogues were held with nearly 200 young mothers across Kenya, Mozambique, and Tanzania to better understand these challenges and the solutions that young mothers propose.

Learn more by scanning the QR code!

Listen to their words and **invest in their solutions!**

- ✓ Invest in building young mothers' **power and social capital**, including work led by young mothers that provides opportunities to challenge the systemic harms they face, build their social networks of support and work collectively to meet their needs.
- ✓ Invest in **systems change** to ensure young mothers have **access to critical services** such as health care, education, childcare and services for their children.
- ✓ Invest to **shift norms** that challenge shame and stigma around early pregnancy and parenting.
- ✓ Invest in **SRHR programming & youth friendly health spaces**, both prevention and safe & supportive pre- and postnatal care.
- ✓ Invest in younger mothers **who face the most discrimination and violence**.

REFERENCES

- Cox, S. M., Lashley, C. O., Henson, L. G., Medina, N. Y., & Hans, S. L. (2021). Making meaning of motherhood: Self and life transitions among African American adolescent mothers. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, *91*(1), 120-131. <https://doi.org/10.1037/ort0000521>
- Early childbearing*. (2022, December). UNICEF. <https://data.unicef.org/topic/child-health/adolescent-health/>
- Erfina, E., Widyawati, W., McKenna, L., Reisenhofer, S., & Ismail, D. (2019). Adolescent mothers' experiences of the transition to motherhood: An integrative review. *International Journal of Nursing Sciences*, *6*(2), 221-228. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijnss.2019.03.013>
- Myrum, J., & Kagwiria, P. (2022). *In Her Words: Listening to Young Mothers in Kenya, Mozambique and Tanzania*. r Conrad Hilton Foundation. <https://www.hiltonfoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/Summary-IHW-layout-131222.pdf>
- Nandi, A., Zahra, F., Austrian, K., Haberland, N., & Ngô, T. D. (2023). Growth failure among children of adolescent mothers at ages 0-5 and 6-12 years in India. *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences*, *1522*(1), 139-148. <https://doi.org/10.1111/nyas.14984>
- Noori, N., Proctor, J. L., Efevbera, Y., & Oron, A. P. (2022). The Effect of Adolescent Pregnancy on Child Mortality in 46 Low- and Middle-Income Countries. *BMJ Global Health*, *7*(5), e007681. <https://doi.org/10.1136/bmjgh-2021-007681>
- Torres-Sánchez, L., Romero, M., & Vázquez-Salas, R. A. (2021). Desarrollo del lenguaje en hijos e hijas de madres adolescentes por área de residencia, Ensanut 100k. *Salud Pública de México*, *63*(4), 521-529. <https://doi.org/10.21149/12200>
- Wittenberg, J.-V. P., Flaherty, L. T., Becker, D. F., Harper, G., Crookall, J. M., Vianna, N., & Group for the Advancement of Psychiatry, Committee on Adolescence. (2022). Stigma as a Source of Stress for Adolescent Mothers and Their Babies. *Journal of Nervous & Mental Disease*, *210*(9), 650-654. <https://doi.org/10.1097/NMD.0000000000001545>

This data brief was created by the Population Council's GIRL Center in collaboration with the Hilton Foundation to inform the thematic roundtable discussion on adolescent mothers at the Girls Deliver Pre-Conference on Adolescent Girls held in Kigali, Rwanda ahead of the Women Deliver 2023 Conference.

Suggested citation:

Alhelou, Nay. 2023. "Adolescent Mothers: From Cautionary Tales to Partners," Girls Deliver Pre-Conference on Adolescent Girls Data Brief. New York: Population Council.