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Child RESEARCH BRIEF

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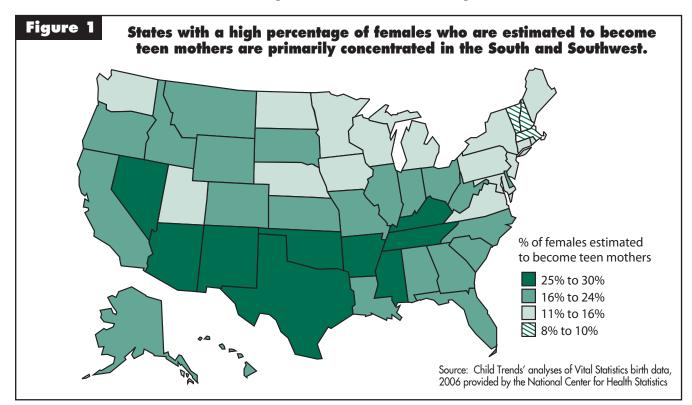
# Estimated Percentage of Females Who Will Become Teen Mothers: Differences Across States

By Kate Perper, M.P.P., and Jennifer Manlove, Ph.D.

**verview.** In 2006, the teen birth rate rose for the first time since 1991. Between 2005 and 2006, the birth rate increased 3 percent for teens aged 15-17 and 4 percent for teens aged 18-19.<sup>4</sup> Teenage childbearing has negative consequences both for the mothers involved and for their children. For example, teen mothers and their children experience poorer educational, health, economic, and developmental outcomes than do women who delay childbearing beyond their teen years and their children. Moreover, this is the case even after accounting for the fact that teen mothers tend to be from disadvantaged backgrounds prior to giving birth.<sup>1,2,7</sup> Given such evidence, policymakers, program providers, and the general public share a keen interest in preventing early motherhood.

This Research Brief provides new state-level information on teen childbearing. To produce the brief, Child Trends analyzed the most recent data on births by state (2006) to estimate the percentage of females who will become mothers before age 20. Statistics on teen childbearing usually are presented in terms of birth rates (the number of births per 1,000 females). Calculating the percentage of females who are estimated to become teen mothers provides additional information that will allow policymakers and program providers to better understand how many young women in their respective states are at risk of early childbearing.

Across the country, the estimated proportion of females who will become teen mothers decreased from 25 percent in 1991 to 18 percent in 2006. However, our analyses show that states vary widely in the estimated percentage of females who will have a baby during their teen years, ranging from less than 10 percent in states with the lowest teen birth rates to 30 percent in the state with the highest teen birth rate.



# PERCENTAGE OF FEMALES ESTIMATED TO BECOME TEEN MOTHERS, BY STATE, 2006

**Overall, more than one in six females is projected to become a teen mother.** Based on 2006 first-birth and population data, an estimated 18 percent of females nationwide will become teen mothers.

The estimated percentage of females becoming teen mothers declined between 1991 and 2006. Reflecting a drop in teen birth rates between 1991 and 2006, the estimated percentage of females becoming teen mothers declined from 25 percent in 1991 to 18 percent in 2006 (see Table 2). The 2006 estimate is slightly higher than the 2005 estimate of 17 percent, which reflects the recent increase in the teen birth rate between 2005 and 2006.

There is considerable variation across states in the percentage of females likely to become teen mothers – from 8 percent to 30 percent. We estimated that in 9 states, concentrated primarily in the South and Southwest, 25 percent or more of females will become teen mothers. These states, listed in order from highest- to lowest-percentage of females estimated to become teen mothers, included Mississippi, New Mexico, Arizona, Texas, Arkansas, Nevada, Oklahoma, Kentucky, and Tennessee (see Figure 1, state rankings in Table 1 and Table 2). In contrast, in only three states—New Hampshire, Vermont, and Massachusetts—were less than 10 percent of females estimated to become teen mothers.

State-level rankings on the likelihood of becoming a teen mother mirror traditional state rankings based on teen birth rates. The five states with the highest estimated percentage of females who will become teen mothers also had the five highest teen birth rates, with rates of 62 or more births per 1,000 females between the ages of 15 and 19 in 2006, compared with a national rate of 42 per 1,000 females in this age group. Meanwhile, the five states in which females had the lowest likelihood of becoming a teen mother had birth rates that were less than 28 per 1,000 females in this age group (see Table 2). Rankings based on the two measures (i.e., percentages and rates), however, are not identical for all states due to differences in the age-specific birth rates and the population distribution within each state.

# DISCUSSION

At the national level, the estimated proportion of females who will become teen mothers decreased from 25 percent in 1991 to 18 percent in 2006. This

### Table 1

#### 2006 State-Level Rankings of the Percentage of Females Estimated to Become Teen Mothers

Ranking	State of residence	% of females estimated to become teen mothers, 2006				
1	Mississippi	30%				
2	New Mexico	29%				
3	Arizona	28%				
4	Texas	28%				
5	Arkansas					
5	-	28%				
6	Nevada	27%				
7	Oklahoma	26%				
8	Kentucky	25%				
9	Tennessee	25%				
10	Georgia	24%				
11	Alabama	24%				
12	South Carolina	23%				
13	Louisiana	23%				
14	North Carolina	22%				
15	Wyoming	21%				
16	Alaska	21%				
17	Missouri	20%				
18	Florida	20%				
19	West Virginia	20%				
20	Indiana	19%				
21	Hawaii	19%				
22	Colorado	19%				
23	Kansas	18%				
23						
	Delaware	18%				
25	Montana	18%				
26	Idaho	18%				
27	California	18%				
28	Ohio	17%				
29	South Dakota	17%				
30	Illinois	17%				
31	Oregon	16%				
32	Virginia	15%				
33		15%				
	Maryland					
34	Michigan	15%				
35	Washington	15%				
36	lowa	14%				
37	Utah	14%				
38	Nebraska	14%				
39	Wisconsin	13%				
40	Pennsylvania	13%				
41	Minnesota	12%				
41	Maine	12%				
43	New Jersey	11%				
44	New York	11%				
45	Rhode Island	11%				
46	North Dakota	11%				
47	Connecticut	10%				
48	Massachusetts	9%				
49	Vermont	9%				
50	New Hampshire	8%				
U.S. Total* 18% Source: Birth data are from the National Center for Health Statistics Vita						
Statistics Syster	ata are from the National Center n Birth Data files for 2006. Popu *U.S. Total includes District of Co	lation data from U.S.				

pattern represents a positive trend; nevertheless, in 2006, there were 435,436 births to females aged 15 to 19. Additionally, states vary substantially in the estimated percentage of females who will become teen mothers. Regardless of where they live, though, teen mothers and their children face economic, educational, and socioemotional challenges. Those who have a baby in their early teens are also at risk of having another baby while still a teenager, which is linked to even poorer outcomes for mothers and children.<sup>3</sup> Teen childbearing is therefore a substantial concern among state policymakers and local program providers.

This *Research Brief* provides a different lens through which to view teen childbearing. Whereas other state-level teen childbearing statistics generally show the number of births per 1,000 females, our estimates of the percentage of females who will become teen mothers allow state officials and local program providers to better understand what proportion of young females in their respective states are at risk of early childbearing. Expanding our state-level knowledge of teen childbearing is important in order to develop strategies to reduce the risk of teenage motherhood and to address the negative outcomes that result from early childbearing.

Child Trends thanks the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation for its support of this *Research Brief* and Stephanie Ventura at the National Center for Health Statistics for her review.

### REFERENCES

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<sup>2</sup> Hoffman, S. D., & Maynard, R. A. (Eds.). (2008). *Kids* having kids: Economic costs & social consequences of teen pregnancy (2nd ed.). Washington, DC: The Urban Institute Press.

<sup>3</sup> Klerman, J. A. (2004). Another chance: Preventing additional births to teen mothers. Washington, DC: The National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy.

<sup>4</sup> Martin JA, H. B., Sutton PD, Ventura SJ, et al. (2009). Births: Final data for 2006. National Vital Statistics Reports; vol 57, no 7. Hyattsville, MD: National Center for Health Statistics.

<sup>5</sup> National Center for Health Statistics. Vital Statistics System Birth Data files for 1991 and 2006. Retrieved January 8, 2009, from http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/datawh/vitalstats/VitalStatsbirths.htm

<sup>6</sup> National Center for Health Statistics. (2007). *Bridged-Race Population Estimates 1991, 2006:* Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

<sup>7</sup> Pogarsky, G., Thornberry, T. P., & Lizotte, A. J. (2006). Developmental outcomes for children of young mothers. *Journal of Marriage & Family*, 68, 332-344.

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# ABOUT THE DATA SOURCES AND METHODOLOGY USED FOR THIS BRIEF

Child Trends drew on two sets of statistics to determine the percentage of females projected to become teen mothers. We used data on first births from the 1991 and 2006 Vital Statistics Systems Birth Data files—gathered and disseminated by the National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS).<sup>5</sup> We also used population data that originated from the 1991 and 2006 NCHS Bridged-Race Population Estimates, which draw from the U.S. Census Bureau.<sup>6</sup> We calculated the percentage of females who had a first birth in each age group (a single year of age for ages 15-19) by dividing the number of first births to females in that age group by the population of females in that age group. In making these calculations, we adjusted for the percentage of the population that already had a first birth. For instance, the population of 16-year-olds at risk of giving birth to a first child in 2006 was reduced by the estimated percentage of teens that had already given birth by age 15. We then added the percentages for ages 15 - 19 to create the estimated percentage of females projected to have a baby before age 20 nationwide and for each state.

Child Trends is a nonprofit, nonpartisan research center that studies children at every stage of development. Its mission is to improve outcomes for children by providing research, data, and analysis to the people and institutions whose decisions and actions affect children. For additional information on Child Trends, including a complete set of available *Research Briefs*, visit our Web site at www.childtrends.org. For the latest information on more than 100 key indicators of child and youth well-being, visit the Child Trends DataBank at www.childtrendsdatabank.org. For summaries of over 300 experimental evaluations of social interventions for children, visit www.childtrends.org/LINKS.

# Table 2

# Estimated Percentage of Females Who Will Become Teen Mothers and Teen Birth Rates, by State, 2006

become teen methers teen methers 15-19 <sup>*</sup> Ages 15-17 Ages 15-17 Ages 15-19 Jeinh   Alabska 11 24 8,537 28 9,3 4.4 17   Alaska 16 21 1,101 19 9,3 4.4 15   Arizona 3 28 12,824 34 100 6.2 5   Arkonsos 5 28 5,946 31 11.4 6.2 4   Colforado 22 19 6,719 24 76 4.4 22   Connecticut 47 10 2,875 12 41 24 4.4   Delawore 24 18 1,619 21 7.5 4.4 12   Georgio 10 24 17,752 23 6.6 40 22   Idaho 20 17 17,752 23 6.6 40 22   Indiane 20 133 13 30		State ranking, % of	% of females	Number of births	Birth Rate (Births per 1,000 females)			State ranking
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II S. Total. 2006* 18 425.436 22 73 42	Wyoming	15	21	850	18	92	47	15
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U.S. Total, 1991* —— 25 519,577 39 94 62 —				435,436				

Source: Birth data are from the National Center for Health Statistics Vital Statistics System Birth Data files for 1991 and 2006. Population data from U.S. Census Bureau \*U.S. Total includes District of Columbia, not shown