

In 1995, nearly three thousand (2,921) Oklahoma school-age girls (age 17 and under) had babies; one hundred fifty-eight Oklahoma mothers were only eleven, twelve, thirteen or fourteen years old.

Rates of births to Oklahoma teens slightly declined (from 41.5 to 41.0 births per 1,000 girls ages 15 through 17) during the past year. The number of Oklahoma counties (38 of 77) where these birth rates improved during the year was just under the number of counties where teen birth rates worsened (39 of 77).

While slow progress (41.0 births per 1,000 girls ages 15 through 17) has been made in decreasing the high Oklahoma teen birth rates of the early 1980s (42.2 per 1,000); comparable rates in the counties improved in most (51 of 77) of Oklahoma's counties during the same period of time.

The highest teen birth rate (64.9 births per 1,000 girls ages 15 through 17) is found in Tillman County; the lowest (9.1 per 1,000) is in Grant County.

Two-thirds (67.3%) of these Oklahoma teen mothers are White.

On the average, every three hours an Oklahoma child (age 17 or younger) becomes a mother.

Oklahoma's teen childbearing ranking relative to other states has worsened over the last decade, with two-thirds (33 states) having a teen (age 15 through 17) birth rate lower than Oklahoma during the most recent year (1995) measured.

Talking Points:

Each young mother is more likely to be poor, to be a victim of physical violence, to have another child before reaching adulthood and to drop out of school than others her age.

Both teen mothers and teen fathers are likely to drop out of school.

Adolescents who become mothers are more likely to not have steady employment, to be on public assistance at some point in their lives, to live in poverty and to experience marital instability, compared to peers who delay childbearing.

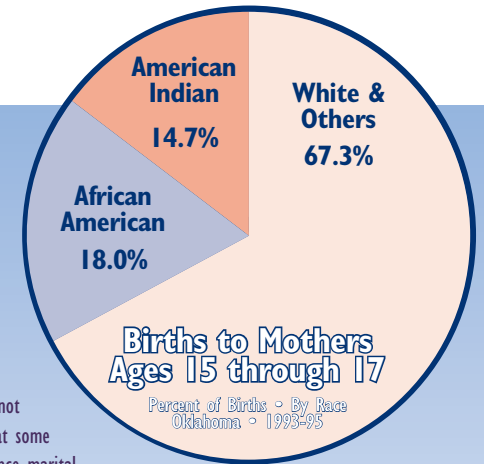
There is a direct relationship between sexual abuse, early sexual activity and teen pregnancy. Studies demonstrate that a large majority of teen mothers report that they had been sexually abused as children.

Children born to children are more likely to repeat the cycle of teen childbearing, to experience lower educational achievement and to exhibit problem behavior.

Children born to children have lower cognitive functioning, do more poorly in school, and experience greater problems with socio-emotional functioning.

Poor literacy skills, poor progress in school and the ensuing loss of self esteem are good predictors of early childbearing. Children who don't read well are at risk for early pregnancy. Young women enrolled in college preparatory curriculum in high school are far less likely to give birth as a teen than are their peers who are not planning further education.

Experts remind us that many young girls become pregnant as a result of child sexual abuse and that the baby's father is frequently an adult man.



COUNTIES WITH THE TEN HIGHEST RATES OF BIRTHS TO TEENS, AGE 15-17, 1993-1995

Almost half (1,327 annual average or 47.8%) of the babies born to Oklahoma teens are in five counties: Oklahoma (601 annual average or 21.6%), Tulsa (435 annual average or 15.7%), Comanche (109 annual average or 3.9%), Cleveland (95 annual average or 3.4%) and Muskogee (86 annual average, or 3.1%).

1. Tillman	64.9 per 1000
2. Adair	60.1 per 1000
3. Muskogee	56.7 per 1000
4. Okfuskee	55.3 per 1000
5. Caddo	52.5 per 1000
6. Mayes	52.0 per 1000
7. Harmon	51.9 per 1000
8. Ottawa	51.8 per 1000
9. Jackson	51.8 per 1000
10. Cherokee	51.6 per 1000

