

Oklahoma Alert: Decrease in teen birth numbers and rates stalls



March 2021

Oklahoma's 2019 teen birth numbers and rates did not show much change, increasing slightly for most age groups for the first time in a dozen years. The 2019 data is pre-pandemic. Recent studies have raised concerns about the impact school and other program closures have had on young people's mental, emotional and sexual health due to the loss of in-person instruction and lack of access to health services. Expanding efforts for effective, relevant in-person and virtual health education must be a top priority.

Trends in Oklahoma teen birth numbers

<u>Ages</u>	<u>2010</u>	<u>2011</u>	<u>2012</u>	<u>2013</u>	<u>2014</u>	<u>2015</u>	<u>2016</u>	<u>2017</u>	<u>2018</u>	<u>2019</u>
14 & younger	101	64	66	69	58	43	49	43	32	29
15 – 17	1,917	1,684	1,667	1,517	1,269	1,225	1,100	964	818	851
18 – 19	4,573	4,335	4,176	3,792	3,523	3,166	3,146	2,822	2,662	2,669
TOTAL	6,591	6,083	5,909	5,379	4,850	4,434	4,295	3,829	3,512	3,549

A closer look at the 2019 teen birth numbers

Oklahoma had 3,549 births to teens aged 19 and younger in 2019, an increase of 37 from 2018 and *the first increase* in 12 years. One-fourth of the births were to teens aged 17 and younger, 29 of them occurred among 10 to 14 year-olds. Three of every four births were to older teens, aged 18 to 19. Half (48%) of the teens had not finished high school, and nearly one birth in every five (17%) was to a girl who was already a parent.

Reducing teen and unintended pregnancies is a smart, cost-effective strategy for improving health, education and economic outcomes.

Number of births by birth order

1 st birth	2,956
2 nd birth	505
3 rd birth	78
4 th birth	7
5 th birth	-

Percentage of births by race/ethnicity

White	68%
Black	15%
American Indian	16%
Asian	1%
Hispanic*	21%

2019 birth rates**

<u>Age</u>	<u>OK</u>	<u>U.S.</u>
15 – 19	27.4	16.6
15 – 17	11.0	6.7
18 – 19	52.1	31.1

* Hispanic may be of any race
** Rates = number of births per 1,000 females the same age

Sources: Oklahoma State Dept. of Health, Vital Statistics 2019
National Center for Health Statistics/CDC, *Births: Provisional Data for 2019* (May 2020)

For more information, check **Healthy Teens OK!** at healthyteensok.org



All youth need access to high quality, effective sexual health education and health services.



In 2018, Oklahoma remained among the states with the highest teen birth rates, ranked **46th** overall (15-19), **45th** for younger teens (15-17), and **48th** for older teens (18-19). This means, Oklahoma had the...

- **5th highest** birth rate to teens, ages 15 – 19.
- **6th highest** birth rate to young teens, ages 15 – 17.
- **3rd highest** birth rate to older teens, ages 18 – 19.

States with the highest birth rates for ages 15-19 in 2018:

OKLAHOMA	27.2
Kentucky	27.3
Louisiana	27.5
Mississippi	27.8
Arkansas	30.4
U.S. Average	17.4

Priorities for action:

- Where teen birth rates/ numbers are highest
- Youth at **greatest risk** for early sexual activity
- Children and youth growing up in **poverty**
- Children experiencing **early school failure** or **family dysfunction**

Groups with high teen birth numbers and rates:

School dropouts - 30% of girls cite pregnancy/parenting as the reason

Older teens (18-19) – nearly *three-fourths* of all teen births each year

System-involved youth (state foster care and juvenile justice, or county juvenile bureau systems) – very vulnerable and underserved

Victims of sexual abuse - in national studies, two-thirds of teen mothers indicate their first sexual intercourse was *non-consensual* and occurred *between ages 9-12*; preventing child sexual abuse is critical!

Teen parents – one in every five teen births is a subsequent birth

Siblings of teen parents - at high risk of becoming a teen parent

Disconnected youth - young people who are not connected to school or work have the greatest potential for risk-taking behaviors

Effective ways to reduce teen birth numbers and rates in your community:

- **Expand high quality, evidence-based, well-delivered programs** that provide medically-accurate, age appropriate information by trained health educators in safe, caring settings -- and show they work!
- **Support groups** like Amplify Tulsa (amplifytulsa.org), Teen emPower Inc. (teenempower.org), Thrive OKC (thriveokc.org), Take Control Initiative (takecontrolok.org), Youth Services of Tulsa (yst.org) and J.A.M.E.S. Inc. (jamesinc.org). For contact info, check: healthyteensok.org
- **Use the latest research and resources** from the Healthy Teen Network, healthyteennetwork.org; Power To Decide, powertodecide.org; and Oklahoma KIDS COUNT, coordinated by the Oklahoma Policy Institute and funded by the Annie E. Casey Foundation, datacenter.kidscount.org/data#OK/2/0
- **Engage youth as leaders in prevention**, check Forum for Youth Investment: www.readyby21.org