

Oklahoma Alert: Teen birth numbers and rates stall... or increase!



April 2021

Oklahoma's teen birth numbers and rates stalled in 2019, 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 health education programs and lack of access to critical health services. Getting young people back in school with effective in-person 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	16.7
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: Final Data for 2019* (April 2021)

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 2019, Oklahoma remained among the states with the highest teen birth rates, ranked **47th** overall (15-19), **48th** for younger teens (15-17), and **47th** for older teens (18-19). This means, Oklahoma had the...

- **4th highest** birth rate to teens, ages 15 – 19.
- **3rd highest** birth rate to young teens, ages 15 – 17.
- **4th highest** birth rate to older teens, ages 18 – 19.

States with the highest birth rates for ages 15-19 in 2019:

OKLAHOMA	27.4
Louisiana	27.8
Mississippi	29.1
Arkansas	30.0
U.S. Average	16.7

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