

## **Teen Births in DuPage County, Illinois**

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### **Introduction**

Teenage births in DuPage County are much lower than in other Illinois counties, and the DuPage teen birth rate compares favorably to the Illinois rate, the U.S. rate, and to the rates of other developed countries including Canada and Great Britain. Through the 1990s, teen birth rates for Canada and Great Britain have been less than half of the U.S. rate<sup>1</sup>. This report will present data for teen births in DuPage County, Illinois, and the United States. It will also include information from the Healthy People 2010, Section 9: Family Planning.

Teen pregnancy rates are estimated from the number of live births, the number of induced abortions, and fetal losses. The most recent year in which teen pregnancy rates were calculated was 1996. The rate computed for the United States was 98.7 per 1,000 women aged 15 to 19. Estimates of teen pregnancy and unintended pregnancy for DuPage County are not available so we rely on teen birth rates as the principle indicator. It should be clear that the issue of teen births should not be separated from the issue of teenage pregnancy even though we are not currently measuring teen pregnancy rates at the local level.<sup>2</sup>

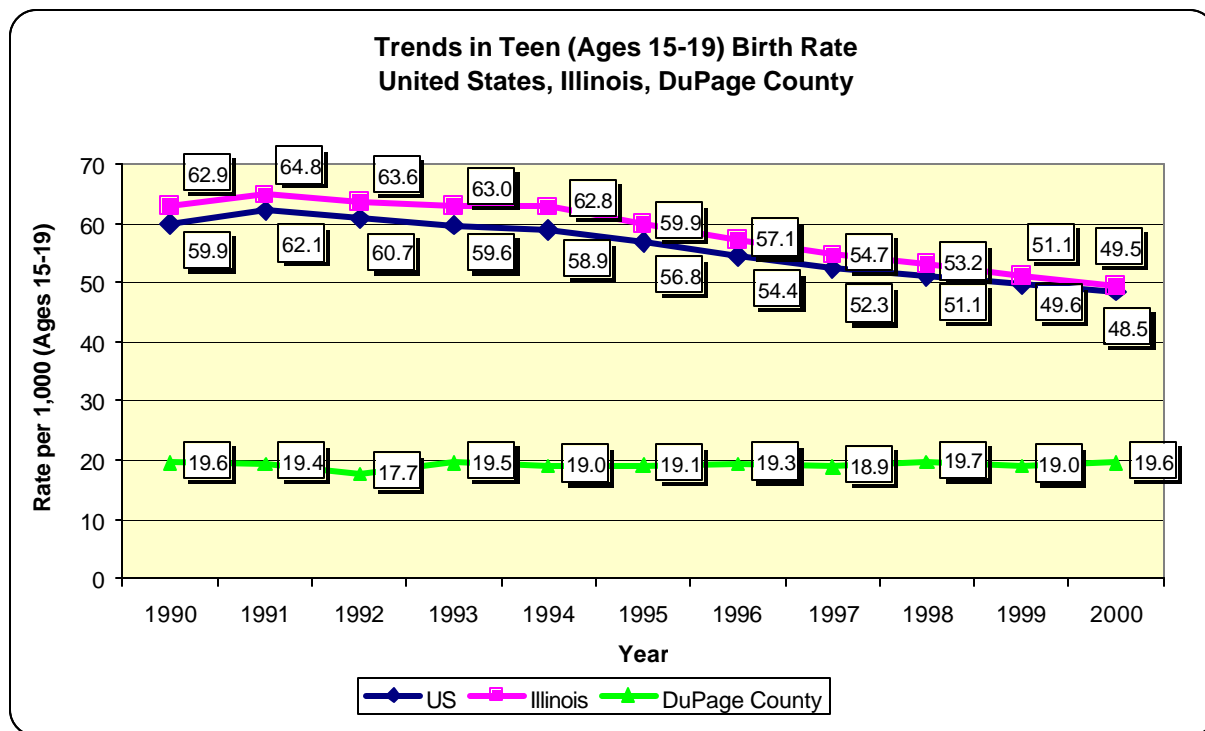
Problems associated with unintended pregnancy in teenagers are well documented. Teenaged mothers are less likely to marry and less likely to complete school. Teenaged mothers are more likely to require public assistance, and more likely to live in poverty. Infants born to teenaged mothers are more likely to suffer from low birth weight and neonatal death. Infants born to teenaged mothers are at greater risk of child abuse and neglect. Research indicates that two years following the first birth, teenaged mothers have a second birth at about the same rate as other mothers.<sup>3</sup>

The statistical information in this report will be presented in several forms, and for different age groups. One primary indicator is the age specific teen birth rate. This is comparable to rates calculated for Illinois and the Nation. Additional trending is presented as a percent of all births and the number of births for various age groups. This is comparable to trends calculated for other Illinois counties and for the state of Illinois.

### **State and National Statistics**

The birth rate for U.S. teenagers in 2000 was 48.5 births per 1,000 women aged 15 to 19 years. This rate is the lowest level ever reported for the Nation. Teen births to women aged 15 to 19 represents 78.7 percent of all teen births. The birth rate for Illinois teenagers in 2000 was 49.5 births per 1,000 women for ages 15 to 19 years. This rate is the lowest level ever reported for the State. Since 1991 the teenage birth rate is down 22 percent and the number of births to teenagers in 2000 is the fewest since 1987. Figure 1 graphically presents the steady decline in U.S. and Illinois teen birth rates from 1990 to 2000.

Figure 1.



The birth rate for teens aged 15 to 17 also declined significantly. For Illinois teens aged 15 to 17 the rate dropped from 40.1 births per 1,000 to 29.5 per 1,000 between 1990 and 1999. For the Nation this rate fell from 37.5 per 1,000 to 28.7 per 1,000.<sup>4</sup>

Most teenage births are to unmarried women. In 1990, 67.1 percent of all teenage births were to unmarried women ages 15 to 19. In 2000 the percent rose to 78.7 percent. A steady decline in first births (teenage mothers giving birth for the first time) has been reflected in National statistics. The majority of all births to teenagers (78 percent) are first births.<sup>5</sup>

Hispanics and Blacks have much higher teen birth rates. In 1999, the teen birth rate for Illinois Hispanics aged 15 to 19 was 102.2 per 1,000. For U.S. Hispanics the rate was 93.4 per 1,000. In 1999, the teen birth rate for Illinois Blacks aged 15 to 19 was 105.2 per 1,000. For U.S. Blacks the rate was 81.0 per 1,000.<sup>6</sup>

### DuPage County Statistics

The birth rate for DuPage teenagers in 2000 was 19.6 per 1,000 women aged 15 to 19 years. See figure 1 above. There were 609 births to DuPage teenagers in 2000. In fact, the number of babies born to DuPage County teenagers has increased for seven of the last eight years. Of the 13,528 births to DuPage County women, 4.5 percent were to mothers 19 years of age or younger. See table 1 below for DuPage County birth numbers. DuPage compares favorably to Lake County where 7.7 percent of all births are to teens and to Illinois where 11.4 percent of all births are to teens. See table 2 below for a comparison of DuPage teen births to Lake County, and Illinois.

**Table 1. DuPage County Births (total number)**

	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000
<b>Total</b>	14,070	14,212	13,928	13,680	13,440	13,251	13,427	13,528
<b>Ages 15-19</b>	514	515	529	547	549	585	576	609
<b>Ages 15-17</b>	153	159	170	196	183	210	173	174

**Table 2. Teen Births in DuPage County, Lake County, and Illinois (as a percent of all births)**

	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000
<b>DuPage</b>	3.7%	3.7%	3.8%	4.0%	4.1%	4.5%	4.3%	4.5%
<b>Lake</b>	8.3%	8.4%	8.7%	8.2%	7.7%	8.1%	8.3%	7.7%
<b>Illinois</b>	12.8%	13.0%	12.9%	12.7%	12.5%	12.4%	12.0%	11.4%

In DuPage County, seven percent of the babies born to teen mothers weighed less than 5 pounds 9 ounces, which is considered low birth weight (figure 2). Thirteen percent of teen mothers had no prenatal care or began care in their third trimester. Teenage mothers are more likely to be less educated and unmarried. Fifty-three percent of DuPage teenage mothers had less than a high school education (figure 3). Seventy-two percent of these teen mothers were unmarried.

**Figure 2.**

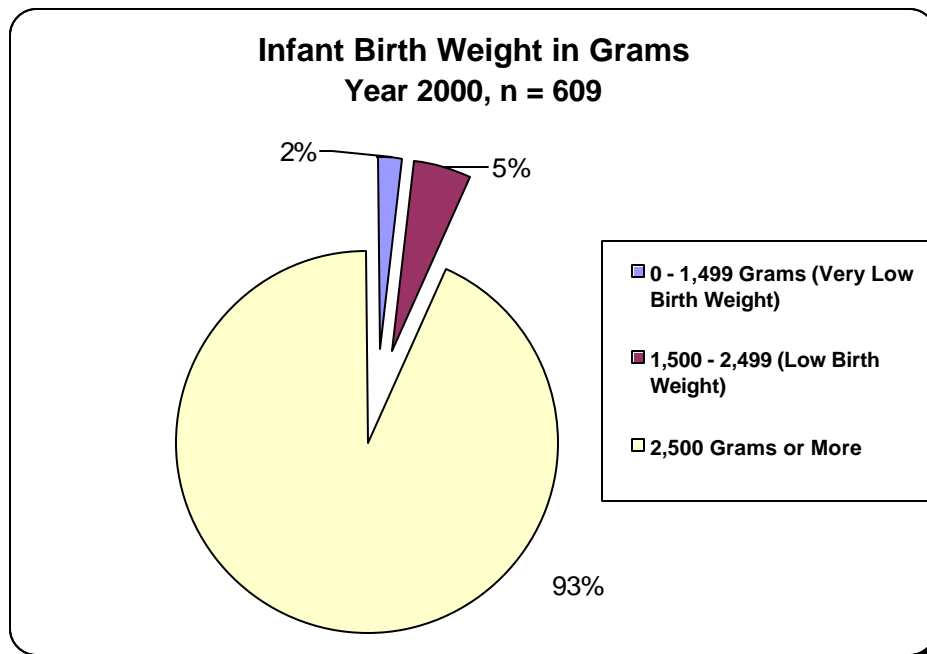
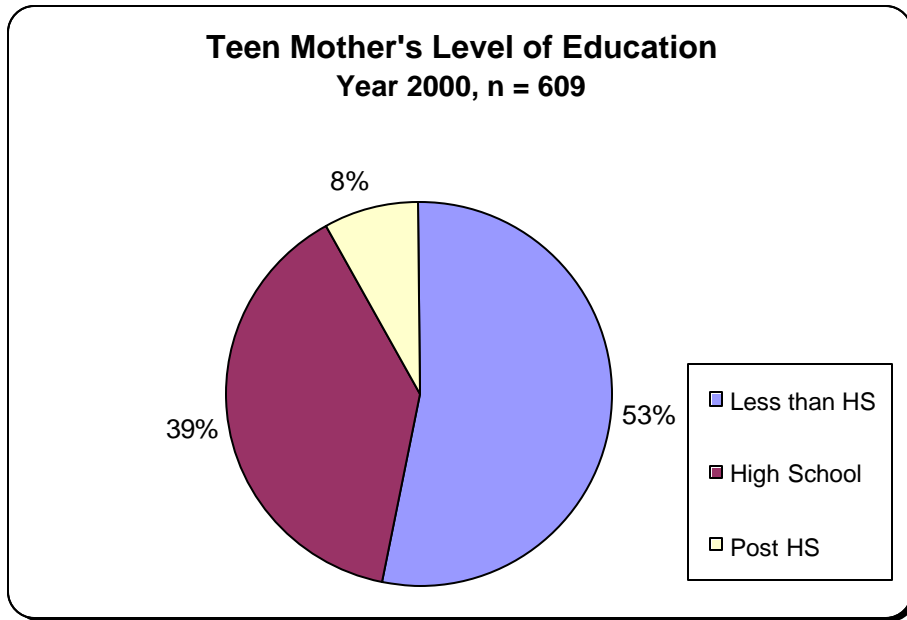
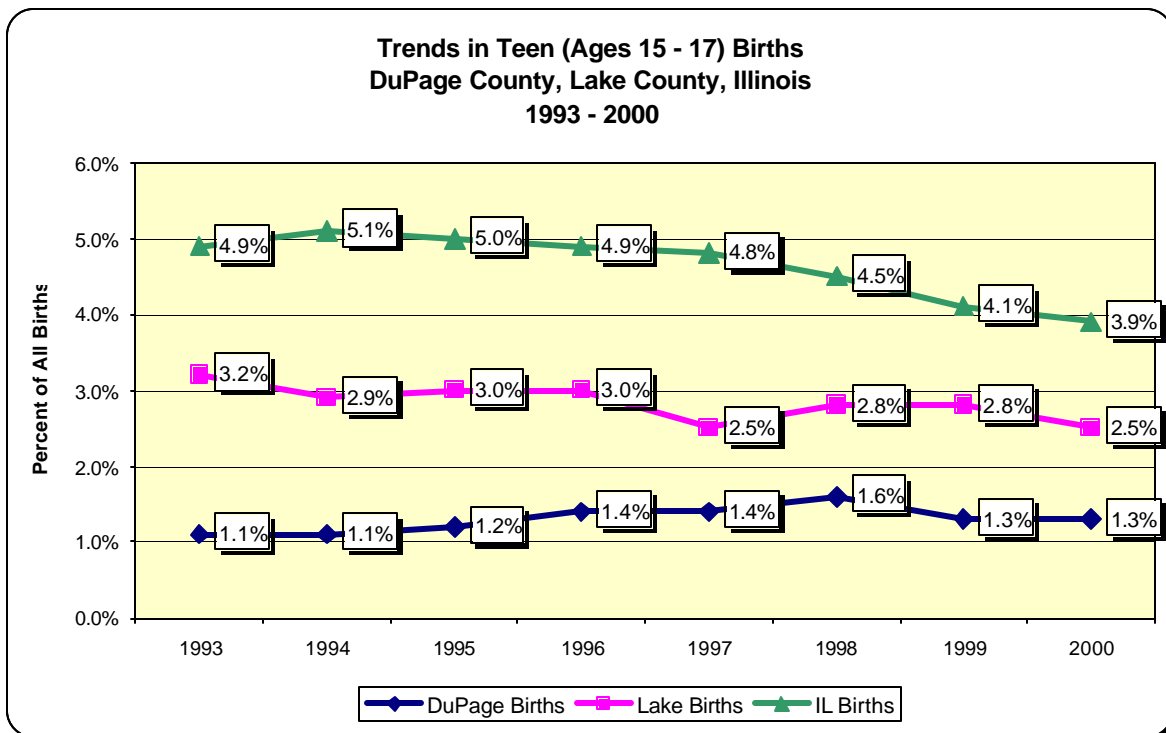


Figure 3.



In 2000, there were 174 births to girls aged 15-17; and 435 births to teens aged 18-19. Typically we consider ages 15 to 19 for teenage births. However, in 2000, there were also four births to girls under age 15. From 1993 to 2000, the percentage of births for teens aged 15 to 17 minimally increased. In 1999 and 2000, teen births in ages 15 to 17 decreased to 1.3 percent of all births. Figure 4 compares trends in teen births for ages 15 to 17 for DuPage County, Lake County, and Illinois.

Figure 4.

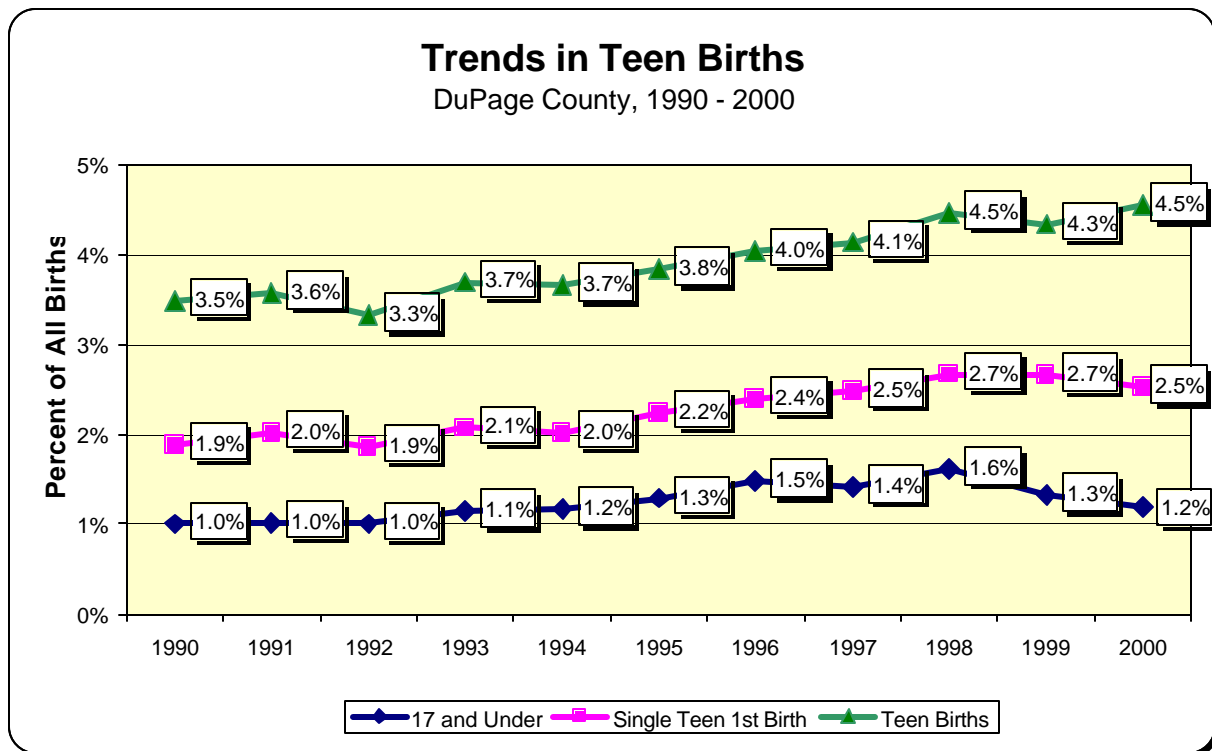


When analyzing teen births for ages 15 to 17, year 2000 only, we also find:

- 19 percent of teen moms had no prenatal care or began care in their third trimester
- 22 percent of the babies born to teen mothers were of low birth weight
- 83 percent of these teen moms were unmarried
- 14 percent were repeat teen births

DuPage County has experienced some fluctuations in teen births over the last ten years; however, teen birth rates remain extremely low. DuPage County teen birth rates are the lowest when compared with the five collar counties of Chicago. DuPage County teen birth rates are well below National and State rates. The vast majority of teen births are to women aged 18 to 19. Most are unmarried. Most are White and non Latino. First births to single teens represents between fifty and sixty percent of all teen births. The percent of first births to single teens (as a percent of all births) has increased from 3.5 percent in 1990 to 4.5 percent in 2000 (figure 5).

Figure 5.



### Healthy People 2010

Healthy People 2010 is the nationwide public health agenda. It provides a roadmap for health promotion and disease prevention to improve the health of all the people in the United States. The two overarching goals - *increase quality and years of healthy life* - *eliminate health disparities* - are supported by 28 focus areas. The issue of teen births and pregnancy fall within the Family Planning focus area (Section 9). The Family Planning focus area goal is to *improve pregnancy planning and spacing and prevent unintended pregnancy*.<sup>7</sup>

The Healthy People (HP) 2010 Objective 9-7, is *reduce pregnancies among adolescent females*. This is an appropriate National impact objective related to teen births. HP 2010 established a

specific target rate for females aged 15 to 17. Based on the 1996 baseline of 68 pregnancies per 1,000 females, the HP 2010 target is 43 pregnancies per 1,000 females aged 15 to 17.<sup>8</sup>

If this target were used for DuPage County teens, aged 15 to 19 for example, there would be an estimated 2,629 pregnancies (based on a 2000 target population of 61,139 teens aged 15 to 19). This may not be an appropriate teen pregnancy target for DuPage County, given that we do not have a current teen pregnancy rate baseline, and that our actual teen birth rates are already well below state and national levels.

Most teen pregnancies are among 18 and 19 year olds. Setting an appropriate target for 15 to 17 year olds, or 18 to 19 year olds would require more extensive analysis and community input.

The other HP 2010 objective worth mentioning is 9-9 – *Increase the proportion of adolescents (aged 15 to 17) who have never engaged in sexual intercourse*. For males and females the HP 2010 target for Objective 9-9 is 75 percent (*adolescents engaged in sexual intercourse*). The 1995 U.S. baseline is 62 percent for females and 57 percent for males. According to the 1999 Youth Risk Behavior Survey for Illinois (excluding Chicago), 51.4 percent of females aged 16 or 17, and 52.2 percent of males aged 16 or 17 never engaged in sexual intercourse. For ages 15 and under, 76.8 percent of females and 73.1 percent of males never engaged in sexual intercourse.<sup>9</sup>

HP 2010 objectives are useful for planning community initiatives and Health Department programs. Local measures and data tracking mechanisms need to be developed for these objectives to be used effectively. Developing appropriate targets for HP 2010 objectives at the local level is a core public health function.

## Conclusions

Teenage births remain an important public health and social issue in DuPage County. Teen births will remain a concern for DuPage communities because our trends do not indicate a significant favorable change over the last ten years as compared to the dramatic decline in teen birth rates in the U.S. and Illinois.

Studies show that teen mothers and their babies face greater health risks because they are less likely to receive timely prenatal care and more likely to have no care at all. As a result, babies born to teenagers are at higher risk for low birth weight.

If a public health goal is to reduce teen birth rates in DuPage County below the current level, without increasing the number of abortions, teen pregnancy rates must be reduced. However, this becomes extremely difficult if a baseline for teen pregnancy in DuPage County is not computed. Additionally, it may be socially unacceptable to set a teen birth rate target in for an increasingly diverse county.

Presumably, teen pregnancy rates can be reduced through contraception. We know that total abstinence is the only foolproof method of contraception. There are many direct and indirect contributing factors effecting teen pregnancy rates, and the resulting teen birth rates. Developing specific strategies to address these factors is dependent on public policy, community education, and resource allocation and availability.

The Healthy People 2010 objectives in Section 9 can be used as a framework program development and local level objective setting. The Youth Risk Behavior Survey can be used to monitor changes in behavior that result from program efforts. Teen birth rates are an important measure of teen behavior and the results of the choices teens make regarding their reproductive health.

It appears those teens aged 17 to 18 may be most at risk for getting pregnant. Most teen births are to 18 and 19 year olds. Almost half of these teenagers are engaging in sexual intercourse, according to results from the 1999 Youth Risk Behavior Survey.

A cornerstone of public health is health promotion and disease prevention. Efforts to impact those factors, which influence teen pregnancy rates and teen birth rates, should focus on the physical and mental health of the target population.

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<sup>1</sup> Darroch JE, Singh S, and Frost JF, Differences in Teenage Pregnancy Rates Among Five Developed Countries: The Roles of Sexual Activity and Contraceptive Use, *Family Planning Perspectives*, 2001, 33(6):244-250 & 281

<sup>2</sup> Ventura, SJ, Mathews, TJ, and Curtin, SC. Declines in Teenage Birth Rates, 1991-98: Update of National and State Trends. *National Vital Statistics Report* 47(26), 1999.

<sup>3</sup> Ventura, SJ, Mathews, TJ, and Hamilton, BE. Births to Teenagers in the United States, 1940-2000. *National Vital Statistics Report* 49(10) 2001.

<sup>4</sup> Ventura, SJ, Mathews, TJ, and Hamilton, BE. Teenage Births in the United States: State Trends, 1991-2000, an Update. *National Vital Statistics Report* 50(19) 2002.

<sup>5</sup> Ventura, SJ, Mathews, TJ, and Hamilton, BE. Births to Teenagers in the United States, 1940-2000. *National Vital Statistics Report* 49(10) 2001.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>7</sup> U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. *Healthy People HP 2010*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. With Understanding and Improving Health and Objectives for Improving Health. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, November 2000. 2(9).

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*