

Teenage pregnancy

August 2010

This factsheet covers government policy and key statistics on teenage pregnancy in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland (United Kingdom/UK). Please note that the data for each country may not be strictly comparable due to differences in methods of data collection and analysis.

- The UK has the highest teenage birth and abortion rates in Western Europe^{1, 2}.
- Rates of teenage births are five times those in the Netherlands, double those in France and more than twice those in Germany².
- In 2006 the teenage pregnancy rate in the USA increased for the first time in 10 years to 71.5 per 1,000 15–19 year olds. Around a third of these ended in abortion³.
- Groups who are more vulnerable to becoming teenage parents include young people who are: in or leaving care, homeless, underachieving at school, children of teenage parents, members of some ethnic groups, involved in crime, living in areas with higher social deprivation⁴.
- Young women living in socially disadvantaged areas are less likely to opt for an abortion if they get pregnant⁵.

England

- Following a report from the Social Exclusion Unit in 1998, the Teenage Pregnancy Unit was set up and a ten-year strategy and action plan was implemented⁶.
- The target was to halve the under-18 conception rate by 2010 (from 46.6 per 1,000 in 1998) and to bring about a decline in the rate of conceptions to under-16s.
- The aim was also to increase the participation of teenage parents in education, employment or training to reduce their long-term risk of social exclusion.
- Further guidance aimed to support more effective local implementation of the strategy^{7, 8} and in 2010 the Government reviewed the achievements and set out further proposals⁹.
- Between 1998 and 2008 the teenage conception rate fell by 13.3 per cent in under-18s and by 11.7 per cent in under-16s.

Teenage pregnancy (cont)

Under-18 conceptions in England¹⁰

	Number of conceptions	Conception rate ^a	Percentage leading to legal abortion
2008 ^b	38,750	40.5	49.7
2006	39,170	40.6	48.8
2005	39,804	41.3	46.8
2002	39,350	42.7	45.8
1998	41,089	46.6	42.4

^a per 1,000 females aged 15–17

^b provisional

Under-16 conceptions in England¹⁰

	Number of conceptions	Conception rate ^a	Percentage leading to legal abortion
2008 ^b	7,123	7.8	61.8
2006	7,330	7.7	60.2
2005	7,473	7.8	57.5
2002	7,395	7.9	55.7
1998	7,855	8.8	52.9

^a per 1,000 females aged 13–15

^b provisional

Wales

- As part of a general sexual health strategy, the Government aims to reduce teenage pregnancy rates¹¹ and has developed an action plan to achieve this¹².
- Between 2000 and 2007 the teenage conception rate fell by 6.5 per cent in under-18s and by 3.4 per cent in under-16s.

Under-18 conceptions in Wales¹³

	Number of conceptions	Conception rate ^a	Percentage leading to legal abortion
2007	2,622	44.9	41.6
2005	2,521	43.6	38.6
2004	2,605	45.1	38.5
2002	2,601	46.0	38.6
2000	2,649	48.0	34.7

^a per 1,000 females aged 15–17

Under-16 conceptions in Wales¹³

	Number of conceptions	Conception rate ^a	Percentage leading to legal abortion
2007	482	8.5	52.9
2005	457	7.9	50.8
2004	434	7.5	49.3
2002	480	8.4	53.5
2000	495	8.8	46.5

^a per 1,000 females aged 13–15

Teenage pregnancy (cont)

Scotland

- The National Sexual Health Strategy for Scotland¹⁴ includes the target to reduce the under-16 conception rate by 20 per cent by 2010 (from 8.5 per 1,000 13–15 year olds in 1995, to 6.8 per 1,000).

Under-18 conceptions in Scotland¹⁵

	Number of conceptions	Conception rate ^a	Percentage leading to legal abortion
2008 ^b	3,857	40.4	45.7
2006	3,912	41.5	45.0
2005	3,920	41.7	44.4
2002	3,807	39.8	39.6
1998	4,212	44.9	36.0

^a per 1,000 females aged 15–17

^b provisional

Under-16 conceptions in Scotland¹⁵

	Number of conceptions	Conception rate ^a	Percentage leading to legal abortion
2008 ^b	713	7.9	61.9
2006	773	8.1	59.1
2005	681	7.1	58.3
2002	686	7.3	51.7
1998	775	8.3	46.4

^a per 1,000 females aged 13–15

^b provisional

Northern Ireland

- The Government aims to reduce the rate of births to teenage mothers under 17 years of age by 25 per cent by 2013 (from a baseline of 3.1 births per 1,000 females aged under 17 years in 2003–2005)¹⁶.
- Conception data is not available for Northern Ireland, due to the lack of complete data on the number of women having abortions. Abortion is only legal in exceptional circumstances and many women will travel to England to have an abortion.
- In 2008, 185 women aged under 20 travelled to England to have an abortion¹⁷, compared with 301 in 2000, although these numbers are likely to be an underestimate.
- In 2008, there were 1,426 teenage births (under 20), a rate of 23.0 per 1,000 15–19-year-olds. The rate has fallen by 6.6 per cent since 2000¹⁸.

Teenage pregnancy (cont)

References

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Other relevant FPA factsheets

Teenagers: sexual health and behaviour.
Teenage pregnancy (Northern Ireland).

Further information

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