

Why It Matters



Teen Pregnancy and Education

Because the relationship between academic failure and teen pregnancy is so strong, and because teen pregnancy affects the educational achievement of teens themselves as well as that of their children, those concerned about educating young people should also be concerned with preventing teen pregnancy. Moreover, given the increasing demands in schooling necessary to qualify for a well-paying job, it is more important than ever for teens to finish high school and attain post secondary education when possible.

- Less than half of mothers (40 percent) who have a child before they turn 18 ever graduate from high school compared with about three-quarters of similarly situated young women who delay child bearing until age 20 or 21.¹
- Furthermore, less than two percent of mothers who have children before age 18 have a college degree by age 30 compared to nine percent of young women who wait until age 20 or 21 to have children.¹
- Parenthood is the leading cause of school drop out among teen girls.²
- Children of teen mothers are more likely than mothers who gave birth at age 20-21 to drop out of high school. In fact, only about two-thirds of children born to teen mothers earned a high school diploma compared to 81 percent of children of later childbearers.¹
- Children of teen mothers also do not perform as well as children of older mothers on measures of child development and school readiness such as cognition, language and communication, and interpersonal skills.³ They are also less likely to read simple books inde-

pendently and to demonstrate early writing ability compared to the children of mothers aged 20-21.³

- Children of teen mothers do worse in school than those born to older parents. They are 50 percent more likely to repeat a grade, are less likely to complete high school than the children of older mothers, and have lower performance on standardized tests.^{1,4}

Parenthood is the leading cause of school drop out among teen girls.

The relationship between education and teen pregnancy works both ways. That is, teen pregnancy often has a negative impact on education, as noted above. It is also the case that school achievement, attendance, and involvement helps reduce the risk of teen pregnancy. Put another way, staying in school and getting an education helps prevent teen pregnancy.

- Teens who have dropped out of school are more likely to become pregnant and have a child than their peers who stay in school.⁵
- Teens who are more involved in their school are less likely than their peers who are not as closely connected to their school to get pregnant. Important aspects of school engagement include grades, test scores, class participation, homework completion, and a perception of support and connectedness with teachers and administrators. Planning to attend college after high school is also associated with a lower risk of teen pregnancy.⁵

SOURCES

1. Hoffman, S.D., *By the Numbers: The Public Costs of Adolescent Childbearing*. 2006, The National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy Washington, DC.
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3. Terry-Humen, E., Manlove, J., & Moore, K., *Playing catch-up: How the children of teen mothers fare*. 2005, National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy: Washington, DC.
4. Haveman, R.H., Wolfe, B., & Peterson, E., *Children of early childbearers as young adults*, in *Kids having kids: Economic costs and social costs of teen pregnancy*, R. Maynard, Editor. 1997, The Urban Institute Press: Washington, DC.
5. Kirby, D., *The Impact of Schools and School Programs upon Adolescent Sexual Behavior*. *The Journal of Sex Research*, 2002. **39**(1): p. 27-33.