

COUNTING IT UP

The Public Costs of Teen Childbearing: Key Data

Teen pregnancy and birth rates in the United States have declined by more than one-third since the early 1990s. Despite this extraordinary progress, it is still the case that about one-third of teen girls get pregnant by age 20 and there were more than 400,000 births to teens in 2008.

Teen pregnancy and childbearing is closely linked to a host of other critical issues—educational attainment, poverty and income, overall child well-being, health issues, and others. *Adding It Up* underscores the significant economic costs of teen childbearing. *Counting It Up* provides updated data on the 2008 public costs of teen childbearing nationally and for all 50 states and the District of Columbia. The new analysis is based on research originally conducted by Saul Hoffman, Ph.D. of the University of Delaware and released by The National Campaign. The new analysis is the first time that taxpayer costs of teen childbearing have been calculated since 2004.

Key data from the *Counting It Up* analysis include:

National Costs of Teen Childbearing:

- **\$10.9 billion:** The cost to taxpayers (federal, state, and local) of teen childbearing in the United States in 2008 alone.
- **\$1,647:** The average annual cost to taxpayers associated with a child born to a teen mother.

Public Costs of Teen Childbearing by State:

- State costs of teen childbearing varied widely across states, driven in part by the size of the state, the incidence of teen childbearing, and the participation in publicly funded programs. For example, in 2008 the cost ranged from \$16 million in North Dakota to \$1.2 billion in Texas.
- Between 1991 and 2008, the cumulative state costs of teen childbearing ranged from \$300 million in North Dakota to \$25 billion in California.
- Visit www.TheNationalCampaign.org/costs for fact sheets on the costs of teen childbearing in all 50 states and Washington, DC.

Public Cost Savings Due to the Decline in the Teen Birth Rate:

- **\$8.4 billion:** Estimated national costs saved by taxpayers in 2008 alone due to the approximately one-third decline in the teen birth rate between 1991 and 2008.
- Teen birth rates declined in all 50 states and Washington, DC between 1991 and 2008 resulting in **substantial cost savings** for taxpayers. In 2008 alone, these savings ranged from \$3.4 million in Wyoming to \$1.4 billion in California.

Public Costs by Category:

Most of the national public costs of teen childbearing are associated with negative consequences for the children of teen mothers. Specific national costs in 2008 include:

- \$2.3 billion in increased public sector health care costs
- \$2.8 billion in increased child welfare costs
- \$2.3 billion in increased costs of incarceration
- \$3.2 billion in lost revenue due to lower taxes paid by the children of teen mothers over their own adult lifetimes as a result of lower education and earnings.¹

About The National Campaign

The National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy seeks to improve the lives and future prospects of children and families. Our specific strategy is to prevent teen pregnancy and unplanned pregnancy among single, young adults. We support a combination of responsible values and behavior by both men and women and responsible policies in both the public and private sectors. If we are successful, child and family well-being will improve.

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¹ Note that while this breakdown reflects costs associated with the *children* of teen mothers, the total cost figure above reflects costs for both the children and their parents. Also note that because we cannot measure and include all outcomes and all costs, the analysis should be considered conservative; that is, it is likely that the full costs of a teen birth are greater than the figures presented here.