As a result of the confluence of successful efforts to prevent unintended births among teens, the United States saved $4.4 billion in public spending in 2015 alone.

Rates of teen births in the United States were 64% lower in 2015 than in 1991, the year that teen birth rates peaked nationally. This tremendous progress means that there were 428,000 fewer births to teens in the U.S. than there would have been had the rate not declined.

New estimates from Power to Decide indicate that:

- Contraception has been cited as a key factor in recent declines in teen pregnancy and public investment in contraception is a critical component of these efforts. At a cost of $239 per person or $1.1 billion for all teens in need across the United States it is money well-spent as compared to the costs of supporting an unintended birth. In fact, one recent study looked extensively at public investment in family planning nationally and found a return of $7 for every $1 spent.

- In the U.S., 30% of women age 13-44 are in need of publicly funded contraception. Unfortunately, 98% of these women in need live in areas without reasonable access to the full range of methods.

- More spending on publicly funded contraception, as well as other supports that enable all young people to avoid unplanned pregnancy is warranted, because if we were able to avert all unintended births among teens, it would amount to $1.9 billion in additional public savings each year in the United States.

PROVIDING A SYSTEM OF SUPPORT THAT ENABLES YOUNG PEOPLE TO HAVE THE POWER TO DECIDE IF, WHEN, AND UNDER WHAT CIRCUMSTANCES TO GET PREGNANT NOT ONLY BENEFITS THE YOUNG PEOPLE THEMSELVES, BUT ALSO LEADS TO SIGNIFICANT SAVINGS IN PUBLICLY FUNDED PROGRAMS.

– Ginny Ehrlich, CEO
Power to Decide
Our analyses also suggested that:

- We estimate that the cost of providing medical and economic supports during pregnancy and the first year of infancy averaged $16,000 per teen birth nationally in 2015. This includes the cost of prenatal, labor and delivery and postpartum care for the mother, one year of infant care, and receipt of WIC, basic TANF assistance, and SNAP during pregnancy and infancy for those who participated.

- Of the 428,000 teen births that were averted in 2015, we assume that nearly two thirds result in public savings, taking into account the likelihood that some teens merely delayed their childbearing until early adulthood and continued to rely on public programs at that point. This results in $4.4 billion in savings, as mentioned above.

- If all teens were able to avoid unplanned pregnancy and childbearing, we estimate that the U.S. could save an additional $1.9 billion in spending each year. This is based on 232,000 teen births that occurred in 2015, the share of those births that follow unplanned pregnancy (based on published estimates at the national level), the public spending per teen birth, and further adjusting for delayed vs averted births as noted above.

The results we present here are conservative on many levels. They account for the fact that some pregnancies that are prevented in one year may simply be postponed to a future year, and they count spending in only a narrow range of publicly funded programs—specifically those directly tied to benefits for mothers during pregnancy through the first year of infancy and for which reliable estimates could be constructed. Undoubtedly, estimates factoring in the longer-term economic and health impacts of unintended pregnancy and childbearing would be much higher. The potential for additional savings associated with prevention focuses on only those teen births following unintended pregnancies. Finally, while public spending is aggregated among only those teen mothers actually participating in the benefits in question, it is then averaged across all teen births, and is thus lower than what would be observed among actual public program participants.

**About Power to Decide.**

Power to Decide, the campaign to prevent unplanned pregnancy, works to ensure that all young people—no matter who they are, where they live, or what their economic status might be—have the power to decide if, when, and under what circumstances to get pregnant. We do this by increasing information, access, and opportunity. In all we do, we are non-partisan and non-ideological, and we ground our work in research and evidence of what is most effective. In our 20+ years of work, we’ve seen historic declines in rates of teen and unplanned pregnancy. But our work is far from done.

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**Endnotes**


5 For more information about analysis of areas lacking reasonable access to the full range of contraception, see https://powertodecide.org/what-we-do/access/access-birth-control

6 Our adjustment was informed by previous studies, including Frost et al, 2014.