

COUNTING IT UP

The Public Costs of Teen Childbearing: Key Data

Teen pregnancy and birth rates in the United States have declined by roughly one-half since the early 1990s. Despite this extraordinary progress, it is still the case that nearly three in 10 teen girls get pregnant by age 20. Although individual families may struggle or thrive under a variety of circumstances, *on average* teen pregnancy and childbearing are closely linked to a host of other critical issues—educational attainment, poverty and income, overall child well-being, health issues, and others.

Counting It Up underscores the significant economic costs of teen childbearing, and provides updated national estimates of the public costs associated with teen childbearing for 2010 (the most recent year for which we have data on both teen childbearing and public spending by program). The updated estimates are based on research originally conducted by Saul Hoffman, Ph.D. of the University of Delaware and released by The National Campaign in 2006. Additional estimates reflecting the cost of teen childbearing at the state level will be released in the near future.

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

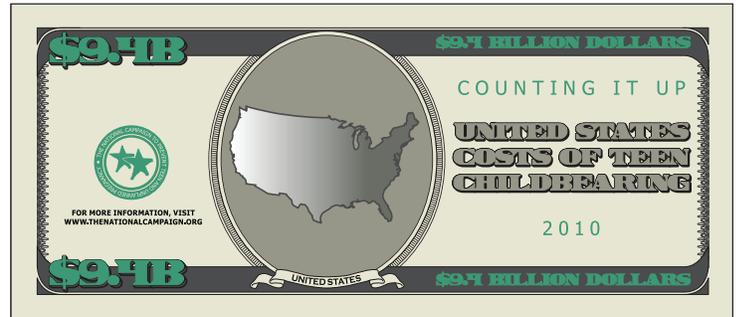
National Costs of Teen Childbearing:

- **\$9.4 billion:** The cost to taxpayers (federal, state, and local) in 2010 alone associated with teen childbearing in the United States.^a
- Although the annual cost is high, it is significantly lower than the estimated cost for 2008—roughly **\$1.5 billion** lower in fact.
- **372,000:** The number of births to women under age 20 in 2010.
- **\$1,682:** The average annual cost to taxpayers associated with a child born to a teen mother during each year from birth to age 15.

Public Costs by Category

Most of the public costs of teen childbearing are associated with negative consequences for the children of teen mothers. Among the most significant of these costs are the following:^b

- **\$2.1 billion** in public sector health care costs.
- **\$3.1 billion** in child welfare costs.
- **\$2 billion** in costs of incarceration.



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

- **\$12 billion:** Estimated national costs *saved* by taxpayers in 2010 alone due to the nearly one-half decline in the teen birth rate between 1991 and 2010.^c

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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NOTES

- Note that children born to teen mothers incur costs in the year of their birth as well as the next 14 years of their childhood. Thus, the total cost of teen childbearing in 2010 includes costs associated with teen births in 2010 as well as teen births in the 14 prior years.
- Note that this breakdown includes just some of the cost categories that factor into the total. The total cost figure above reflects costs for the children's parents as well. 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.
- This is based on a comparison to what spending would have been if teen birth rates for younger and older teens across all 50 states had remained as high as they were in 1991.