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## Teen Births in Alaska, 1993 to 2002

**B**irths to teenage mothers can create serious consequences for the teen mother, the child, and society in general. Teen mothers often drop out of school, making it difficult for them to learn work-related skills. As a result, they may be trapped in a lifetime of low-paying jobs and may depend more on governmental support through programs such as Medicaid or the Alaska Temporary Assistance Program (ATAP). Children born to teen mothers are more likely to have health related problems such as low birth weight, increasing their risk of serious long-term illness, developmental delays, or infant death. They are also much more likely to be abused and neglected compared with children born to older mothers.

This newsletter examines the trends in the overall teen birth rate, teen births as a percentage of all births, and race-specific teen birth rates from 1993 to 2002.

### *Methods*

Teen birth information was obtained from the Bureau of Vital Statistics (BVS) natality file that contains records of all live births that occur in Alaska. This study only includes teenagers who were Alaska residents when they gave birth. Teen birth rates are reported in the number of live births per 1,000 females age 15 to 19.

Teen birth rates were calculated using smoothed, bridged-race population estimates developed by the Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Research and Analysis Section, Demographics Unit. Linear regression methods were used for analyzing trends in this report and for estimating average percent changes in the teen birth rate.

### *Results*

#### *Teen Births*

The number of teen births during this period ranged from a low of 1,056 births in 2001 to a high of 1,206 births in 1994, averaging 1,123 teen births per year. From 1993 to 2002, the number of teen births decreased by an average of 1.1 percent per year. The ratio of the number of white teen mothers to Alaska Native teen mothers has also decreased, from 1.6 in 1993-1994 to 1.1 in 2001-2002.

### Percentage of Teen Births

Teenagers accounted for almost one of every nine births (11.0 percent) in Alaska from 1993 to 2002, ranging from a low of 10.6 percent of all births in 1993 and 2001 to a high of 11.7 percent in 2000. Statistically the proportion of births to teen mothers remained unchanged during this period.

Teen births as a percentage of all births varied widely by the mother's race. The percentage of infants born to teen mothers is about twice as high among Alaska Native and black mothers as it is among white and Asian/PI mothers (Table 1). Although the overall percentage of births to teen mothers did not increase during this period, Alaska Native teen births as a percentage of all Alaska Native births increased from 16.1 percent in 1993 to 17.5 percent in 2002 (P=.046).

### Teen Birth Rates

The overall teen birth rate declined significantly from 1993 to 2002, from 60.7 births per 1,000 teens in 1993 to 41.7 in 2002, an overall decrease of 31.3 percent and an average decrease of 3.9 percent per year. About half this decrease occurred in the past three years, as the teen birth rate has decreased 15.6 percent since 2000.

The overall Alaska teen birth rate was nearly identical to the overall U.S. teen birth rate from 1993 to 2002 (Figure 1). Both teen birth rates showed similar percentage decreases (31.3 percent Alaska and 28.0 percent U.S.) and both have seen significant decreases since 2000 (Alaska: 15.6 percent; U.S.: 11.9 percent). With the exception of 2001, statistically there was no difference between the U.S. and Alaska teen birth rate from 1993 to 2002.

Black teen mothers showed the greatest overall percentage decrease in the teen birth rate and correspondingly showed the greatest average percentage change. White and Asian/PI mothers showed similar decreases in teen birth rate. The rate of teenage Alaska Native mothers giving birth also decreased during this period, but they only averaged about half the annual percentage decrease as other teens.

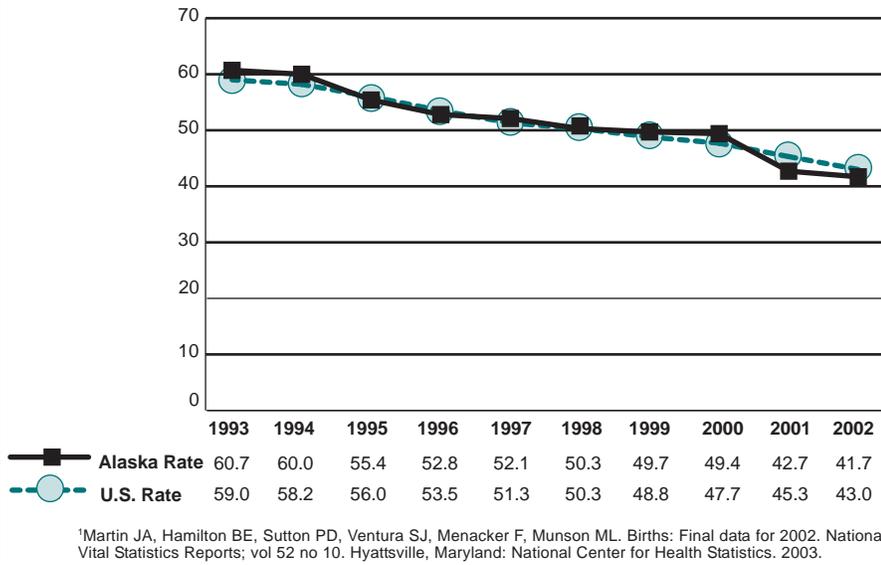
### Discussion

The overall teen birth rate decreased significantly from 1993 to 2002, meaning that proportionally fewer teens are choosing to give birth in 2002 compared with 1993. If the teen birth rate had remained at the 1993 level through 2002, there would have been about 2,100 additional births to teenagers during this period.

**Table 1. Teen Births and Teen Births as a Percent of All Births By Mother's Race: Alaska 1993 to 2002**

	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002
<b>Alaska Native</b>										
Births	396	388	407	387	380	415	433	459	457	424
Percent	16.1	16.5	17.7	16.1	15.9	17.2	17.6	18.4	18.1	17.5
<b>Asian/PI</b>										
Births	41	38	44	43	58	46	48	59	55	60
Percent	7.9	8.1	9.1	8.7	11.3	9.6	10.6	9.4	8.7	8.8
<b>Black</b>										
Births	94	79	84	65	68	53	70	79	63	57
Percent	16.1	16.0	18.7	14.9	14.9	13.4	16.4	17.3	14.4	13.3
<b>White</b>										
Births	649	696	596	602	593	586	551	556	473	507
Percent	8.6	9.5	8.5	9.0	9.0	8.9	8.5	8.9	7.5	8.1
<b>All Teens</b>										
Births	1181	1206	1132	1098	1100	1103	1122	1163	1056	1067
Percent	10.6	11.3	11.1	10.9	11.0	11.1	11.3	11.7	10.6	10.7

**Figure 1. Teen Birth Rates in Alaska and the U.S.<sup>1</sup> 1993 to 2002**



From 1993 to 2002 the Alaska Native teen birth rate declined significantly (28.6 percent), yet the disparity between the white teen and Alaska Native teen birth rates has increased. In 1993, the Native teen birth rate was 2.3 times that of white teens. By 2002 the Alaska Native teen birth rate had increased to 2.5 times that of white teenagers. The disparity between the two birth rates has increased because the white teen birth rate decreased about one-third more than the Native teen birth rate from 1993 to 2002.

Although the teen birth rate decreased 31.3 percent from 1993 to 2002, the number of teen births only decreased 9.7 percent. The number of births to teen mothers is primarily driven by two

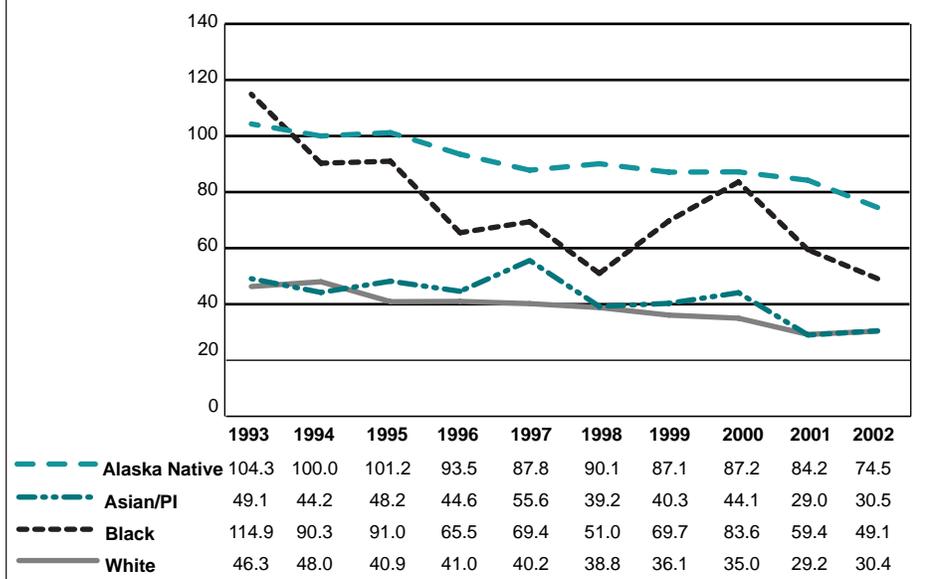
factors. The first is the birth rate, which measures the proportion of teen mothers giving birth in a given year and the second factor is the number of female teenagers in the population. One reason why the number of teen births decreased much less than the teen birth rate is that the female teen population in Alaska increased 31.8 percent from 19,467 in 1993 to 25,648 in 2002, which helped offset the 31.3 percent decrease in the teen birth rate.

The number of teens births is important since it is an indicator for the amount of special services that may be needed to support the teen mother and her child. Public assistance expenditures, lost tax revenues, foster care costs, and health care for children of teen mothers are all part of the cost of teen births. Additionally, since infants of teen mothers are more likely to experience health problems, developmental delays, and an increased risk of infant death, the number of infants at risk for adverse health outcomes has changed little during this period. Given the above issues, sustained attention to preventing teen birth in Alaska is essential.

**Table 2. Annual and Total Percent Change in the Teen Birth Rate in Alaska by Mother's Race: 1993 to 2002**

Mother's Race	1993 Rate	2002 Rate	Total % Change	Average Yearly % Change
Alaska Native	104.3	74.5	-28.6%	-3.1%*
Asian/PI	49.1	30.5	-37.9%	-4.9%*
Black	114.9	49.1	-57.3%	-6.5%*
White	46.3	30.4	-34.3%	-5.0%*
All Teens	60.7	41.7	-31.3%	-3.9%*

**Figure 2. Teen Birth Rates in Alaska by Mother's Race 1993 to 2002**



**Objectives:** This newsletter looks at the trends in the number, proportion, and rate of teen births in Alaska for the ten-year period 1993 to 2002.

**Methods:** The Bureau of Vital Statistics natality file and bridged single-race population estimates developed by the Alaska Division of Public Health were used to calculate overall teen birth rates and race-specific teen birth rates from 1993 to 1999.

**Results:** Teen birth rates have decreased 31.3 percent since 1993, with about half the decrease occurring since 2000. White, Asian/PI, and black teen birth rates have decreased more than the overall teen birth rate, while Alaska Native teen birth rates have declined less. Alaska Native teens have the highest birth rate of all racial groups in Alaska. The ratio of the Alaska Native teen birth rate to the white teen birth rate increased from 2.3 times that of white teens in 1993 to 2.5 in 2002.

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Return Service Requested

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