

No Time for COMPLACENCY

TEEN BIRTHS IN CALIFORNIA

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California's progress has been unmatched among the other 49 states. The national teen birth rate decreased 45% during this same period, from 61.8 to 34.3 births per thousand. And the teen birth rate in Texas, a state that is demographically similar to California, decreased just 26%, from 78.4 to 58.0. California's rate now stands at exactly half the Texas rate.

Hispanics continue to drive California's teen birth rate reduction (see Figure 1). Although still experiencing a higher rate than any other racial/ethnic group, in just four years, the Hispanic teen birth rate decreased by a phenomenal 20 births per thousand, from 65.0 in 2006 to 45.0 in 2010. Smaller decreases occurred among other racial/ethnic groups in California: 7.0 among American Indians, 6.8 among non-Hispanic Blacks, 3.6 among Asian/Pacific Islanders, and 1.9 among non-Hispanic Whites.

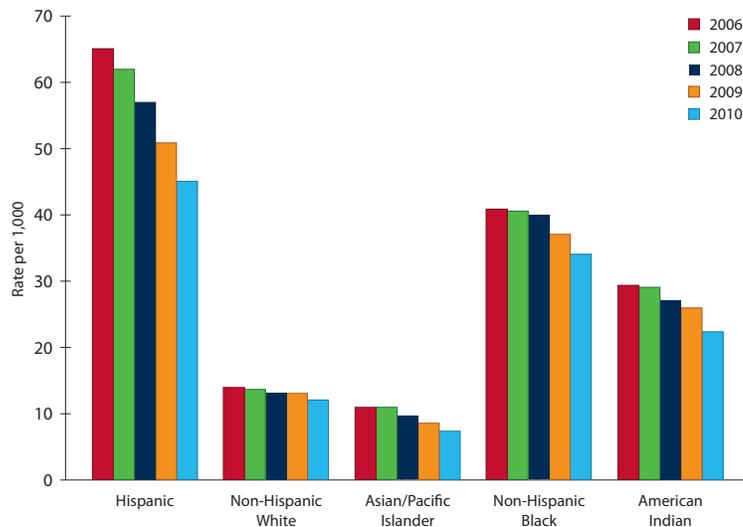


Figure 1. Teen Birth Rates by Race/Ethnicity in California, 2006–2010

REGIONAL AND COUNTY VARIATIONS

Among California's five regions, the Central Valley had the highest teen birth rate in 2010, at 41.6 births per thousand. The North/Mountains region (23.5) and the San Francisco Bay Area/Central Coast region (23.3) had the lowest rates, whereas Los Angeles County (27.3) and the South region (28.9) had rates comparable to that of California overall.

At the county level, 2010 teen birth rates ranged from a low of 10.0 in Marin County to a high of 64.4 in Del Norte County. Five counties stood out with very low teen birth rates, all below 15 per thousand: Marin, Placer, Amador, Nevada, and El Dorado. Four counties had exceptionally high rates above 50 per thousand: Del Norte, Tulare, Kern, and Imperial. County-by-county details can be found in the table on page 4.

Because of variation in the racial/ethnic composition of counties, regions, and states, comparisons can be more informative when rates are examined separately for specific racial/ethnic groups. Figure 2 shows a comparison of teen birth rates for Hispanic teens, California's most populous racial/ethnic group among 15-19 year-olds, across selected counties and states. (Similar charts for other racial/ethnic groups can be found in the expanded chart pack at <http://teenbirths.phi.org>.)

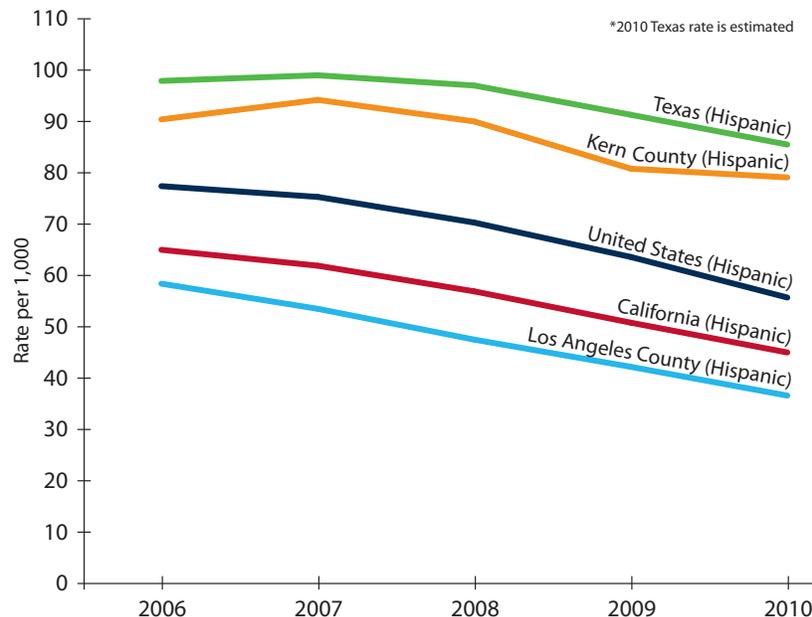


Figure 2. Birth Rates Among Hispanic Teens for Selected Areas, 2006–2010

When population demographics vary, comparing county and state teen birth rates separately within racial/ethnic groups can be especially compelling. For example, the overall 2010 California teen birth rate (29.0) was 5.3 points lower than the overall United States rate (34.3). Yet within four of California's five major racial/ethnic groups, the difference between California and United States rates was at least twice as large as this 5.3 point overall difference. California's Hispanic teen birth rate (45.0) was 10.7 points lower than the United States Hispanic teen birth rate (55.7), with even larger differences within non-Hispanic White (11.5 lower), non-Hispanic Black (17.5 lower), and American Indian (16.4 lower) groups.

The reason for this counter-intuitive result is that California has a higher proportion of Hispanic female teens than does the United States. Because Hispanic teens have the highest birth rate among the five major racial/ethnic groups, this can diminish differences based on overall rates. Therefore, when compared with the United States, California's only-slightly lower overall rate obscures the much lower rates within racial/ethnic groups.

A similar pattern can be found in comparing Los Angeles County to California, with Los Angeles County's overall teen birth rate just 1.7 points lower than California's. Yet the race/ethnicity-specific teen birth rate differences were substantially larger than this for every racial/ethnic group. Most dramatically, Los Angeles County's Hispanic teen birth rate was 8.4 points lower than the rate for California Hispanic teens. As was the case with the California–United States comparison, the slightly lower overall rate in Los Angeles County relative to that in California as a whole obscures the even lower rates within each racial/ethnic group in Los Angeles County. And again, the reason is a higher proportion of Hispanics in the female teen population in Los Angeles county than in California overall.

ROOM FOR IMPROVEMENT

Despite California's substantial progress, when California's teen birth rate is compared against rates in other Western democracies, which average 10.3 teen births per thousand, it becomes evident that there is still room for further improvement (see Figure 3). But it is important to recognize that the Western democracies included in the 10.3 average are not as racially and ethnically diverse as is California.¹ Nevertheless, the challenge is clear and the room for improvement is considerable.

TEEN BIRTH COSTS

Because teens who give birth tend to have preexisting disadvantages compared with those who do not, the perceived consequences of teen births have been subject to considerable debate and some exaggeration. Nevertheless, most experts agree that credible research evidence has demonstrated negative consequences of teen childbearing in several areas. For example, teen women who become mothers tend to exhibit poorer psychological functioning, lower levels of educational attainment, more single parenthood, and less stable employment than do those with similar backgrounds who postpone childbirth. Relative to older mothers, teen mothers tend to experience slightly more pregnancy-related problems and have less healthy infants. Of all age groups, teens are most likely to smoke during and after pregnancy—and exposure to environmental tobacco smoke directly increases an infant's risk of bronchitis, asthma, pneumonia, reduced lung capacity, sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS), and middle-ear disease and infections. Preschool children of teen mothers tend to show

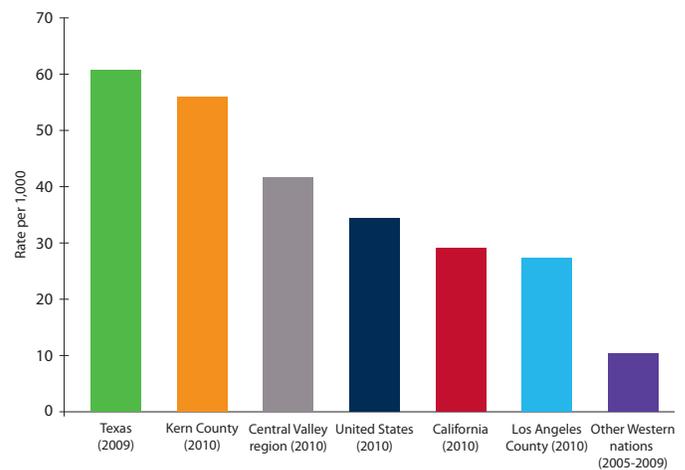


Figure 3. Selected Teen Birth Rate Comparisons

some delay of cognitive development as well as more behavioral problems and more aggressive behavior than do children of older mothers, whereas teenage children of teen mothers experience higher rates of grade failure, delinquency, and early sexual activity. Children of teen mothers also are more likely to experience abuse and neglect and more likely to be placed in foster care. Fathers to children of teen mothers tend to achieve less education and lower earnings over time than do their non-parenting peers, most likely due to the early focus on working at the expense of education. (For references and a more detailed discussion of these issues, see the 2003 *No Time for Complacency* report at <http://teenbirths.phi.org/TeenBirthsFullReport.pdf>. For an alternative viewpoint, see the 2010 National Latina Institute for Reproductive Health's *Removing Stigma: Toward a Complete Understanding of Young Latina's Sexual Health* at <http://tinyurl.com/2839sge>.)

In addition to the personal challenges and lost opportunities faced by teen mothers and their children and partners, the economic costs to society associated with teen births cannot be ignored. Using rigorous teen birth cost estimation methods developed by Maynard and colleagues in 1997, and updated by Hoffman and Maynard in 2008, we calculated the costs of California teen births to taxpayers and to society. (These methods and our application are described in detail in a methodological appendix at <http://teenbirths.phi.org>.)

We estimated both taxpayer and societal costs for California teen births, yielding an annual total net cost to taxpayers of \$870 million and an annual total net cost to society of \$3.6 billion. Across counties, costs varied substantially. The table on page 4 provides 2010 teen births, birth rates, birth rate ranks, birth rate changes since 2006, and estimated taxpayer and societal costs for California, its counties, and the United States.

¹The 2010 White teen birth rate in California and many of its counties is comparable to that of many Western democracies. For example, Los Angeles's 2010 non-Hispanic White teen birth rate of 6.6 is lower than the overall rate in Finland, Norway, Germany, and France, and nearly as low as the rate in Sweden, Denmark, and the Netherlands.

COUNTY	TEEN BIRTHS (2010)	TEEN BIRTH RATE (PER 1000)	TEEN BIRTH RATE RANK	TEEN BIRTH RATE CHANGE (2006-2010)	EST'D ANNUAL TAXPAYER COSTS	EST'D ANNUAL SOCIETAL COSTS
Del Norte	65	64.4	1	20.6	\$1,200,000	\$5,200,000
Tulare	1,122	56.2	2	-4.5	\$24,000,000	\$96,000,000
Kern	2,010	56.0	3	-6.5	\$40,000,000	\$170,000,000
Imperial	417	52.9	4	-5.8	\$8,300,000	\$34,000,000
Fresno	2,023	49.9	5	-6.4	\$43,000,000	\$170,000,000
Monterey	775	49.8	6	-5.2	\$18,000,000	\$71,000,000
Madera	326	49.5	7	-14.2	\$7,000,000	\$28,000,000
Kings	298	48.2	8	-15.9	\$6,000,000	\$25,000,000
Lake	87	43.8	9	-2.1	\$1,500,000	\$6,500,000
Merced	509	43.1	10	-14.4	\$11,000,000	\$45,000,000
Tehama	106	43.1	11	-2.1	\$1,700,000	\$7,800,000
Yuba	144	42.2	12	-11.7	\$2,200,000	\$10,000,000
Santa Barbara	638	38.3	13	-4.8	\$14,000,000	\$55,000,000
San Bernardino	3,476	37.1	14	8.9	\$67,000,000	\$280,000,000
Glenn	43	36.0	15	0.9	\$920,000	\$3,700,000
UNITED STATES	367,752	34.3	—	-6.8	\$71 billion	\$30 billion
Mendocino	103	34.1	16	2.1	\$1,400,000	\$6,800,000
Siskiyou	50	33.4	17	-5.4	\$700,000	\$3,300,000
Stanislaus	807	33.2	18	-11.1	\$16,000,000	\$65,000,000
San Joaquin	1,071	33.1	19	-18.9	\$21,000,000	\$87,000,000
Lassen	34	30.8	20	10.3	\$510,000	\$2,400,000
Santa Cruz	257	30.0	21	-2.3	\$5,800,000	\$23,000,000
Riverside	2,918	29.9	22	-11.5	\$58,000,000	\$240,000,000
Ventura	932	29.7	23	-7.7	\$17,000,000	\$74,000,000
CALIFORNIA	43,127	29.0	—	-8.8	\$870 million	\$3.6 billion
Sacramento	1,594	28.7	24	-8.3	\$27,000,000	\$120,000,000
Shasta	196	28.4	25	-3.9	\$3,400,000	\$15,000,000
Los Angeles	11,677	27.3	26	-11.6	\$250,000,000	\$1,000,000,000
San Diego	3,163	27.3	27	-7.4	\$60,000,000	\$250,000,000
Humboldt	124	27.1	28	-3.9	\$1,400,000	\$7,300,000
Sutter	109	26.5	29	-19.1	\$2,200,000	\$9,100,000
Solano	371	22.7	30	-6.7	\$7,600,000	\$31,000,000
Butte	205	22.6	31	-8.8	\$3,000,000	\$14,000,000
Calaveras	34	22.0	32	4.2	\$440,000	\$2,200,000
Orange	2,479	21.4	33	-8.5	\$53,000,000	\$210,000,000
Alameda	1,059	21.2	34	-6.8	\$19,000,000	\$81,000,000
Sonoma	355	20.7	35	-5.0	\$7,500,000	\$30,000,000
Napa	102	20.2	36	-9.8	\$2,100,000	\$8,600,000
San Luis Obispo	198	19.6	37	-0.1	\$4,300,000	\$17,000,000
Santa Clara	1,176	19.5	38	-7.7	\$27,000,000	\$100,000,000
Contra Costa	743	19.5	39	-4.6	\$16,000,000	\$63,000,000
San Francisco	229	18.1	40	-2.6	\$3,700,000	\$17,000,000
Yolo	174	17.4	41	-5.8	\$4,400,000	\$17,000,000
San Mateo	351	16.3	42	-6.0	\$8,000,000	\$31,000,000
San Benito	43	16.3	43	-18.6	\$780,000	\$3,300,000
Tuolumne	25	15.8	44	-7.5	\$240,000	\$1,400,000
El Dorado	94	13.4	45	-1.8	\$1,300,000	\$6,200,000
Nevada	45	13.0	46	-3.4	\$780,000	\$3,400,000
Amador	13	12.2	47	-5.2	\$480,000	\$1,600,000
Placer	167	12.1	48	-4.5	\$2,800,000	\$12,000,000
Marin	73	10.0	49	-1.3	\$1,900,000	\$7,100,000

TABLE. CALIFORNIA, COUNTY, AND UNITED STATES TEEN BIRTHS, BIRTH RATE, RANK, RATE CHANGE, AND ESTIMATED COSTS, 2010
NOTE: Alpine, Colusa, Inyo, Mariposa, Modoc, Mono, Plumas, Sierra, and Trinity are not included as these counties have fewer than 5 births or 1,000 female teen population.

CALIFORNIA'S INVESTMENT

During most of the past two decades, California has been the national leader in focusing on and investing in effective policies and programs for positive adolescent development and teen pregnancy prevention. This leadership has spanned the administrations of four governors across both political parties.

The cost of the investments California has made into teen pregnancy prevention education, programs, and services has not been small. Even after the budget cuts of the past several years—resulting in the loss of approximately \$70 million of funding for Community Challenge Grant (CCG), Information & Education (I&E), Adolescent Family Life Program (AFLP), Male Involvement Program (MIP), TeenSMART Outreach, and Cal-Learn—California is still investing more than \$200 million of state and federal funds annually on teen pregnancy prevention.

But the cost of these investments pales when compared with the savings in taxpayer costs (see Figure 4). If California's rate had equaled Texas's rate of 58.0 births per thousand in 2010, we would have experienced an additional 43,191 births in 2010. Translated into cost savings, California's success represents an annual savings to California taxpayers of \$826 million. Yet, recent budget cuts and ongoing budget pressures now threaten to reverse these savings.

TEEN BIRTHS AND SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED DISEASES

Chlamydia and gonorrhea are the most common reportable sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) in California. Teens aged 15-19 years and young adults aged 20-24 years experience the highest rates

of chlamydia and gonorrhea of all age groups. Despite an intuitive expectation that higher teen birth rates would be associated with higher female teen rates of chlamydia and gonorrhea, there is little association between the two—across California counties, statistical correlations with teen birth rates are near zero (.12 for female teen chlamydia rates and -.07 for female teen gonorrhea rates). Many counties with high teen birth rates, such as Tulare and Del Norte, do not have high rates of chlamydia or gonorrhea. At the same time, some counties with low teen birth rates, such as San Francisco, Contra Costa, Alameda, and Solano, have high rates of chlamydia and gonorrhea among female teens. (See Figure 5 for teen birth rates plotted against female teen chlamydia rates, and the expanded chart pack at <http://teenbirths.phi.org> for a similar plot of teen birth rates by female teen gonorrhea rates.)

This absence of association is not totally surprising. STDs are communicable diseases, whereas teen pregnancies are not, and the likelihood of contracting an STD partially depends on the how prevalent that STD is in a particular area. In addition, chlamydia and gonorrhea are often asymptomatic, and the known rates of these two STDs are based solely on reported cases. Cases are generally reported only when an individual seeks treatment or through screening programs. County differences in screening programs and treatment opportunities, as well as differences in voluntary reporting by providers, can artificially affect known rates.

Furthermore, chlamydia and gonorrhea rates vary substantially by racial/ethnic group, with extreme disparities affecting non-Hispanic Blacks. For example, the 2010 statewide rate of chlamydia among non-Hispanic Black female teens was almost 4 times higher, and the gonorrhea rate was 20 times higher, than among Hispanic

female teens, the group with the second highest rate. The counties with a low teen birth rate but high chlamydia and gonorrhea rates noted above also have a higher proportion of non-Hispanic Black female teens (2010 population data for San Francisco: 13.5%, Contra Costa: 9.7%, Alameda: 13.8%, Solano: 12.2%) than do the counties with a high teen birth rate but lower chlamydia and gonorrhea rates (2010 population data for Tulare: 1%, Del Norte: 0.9%).

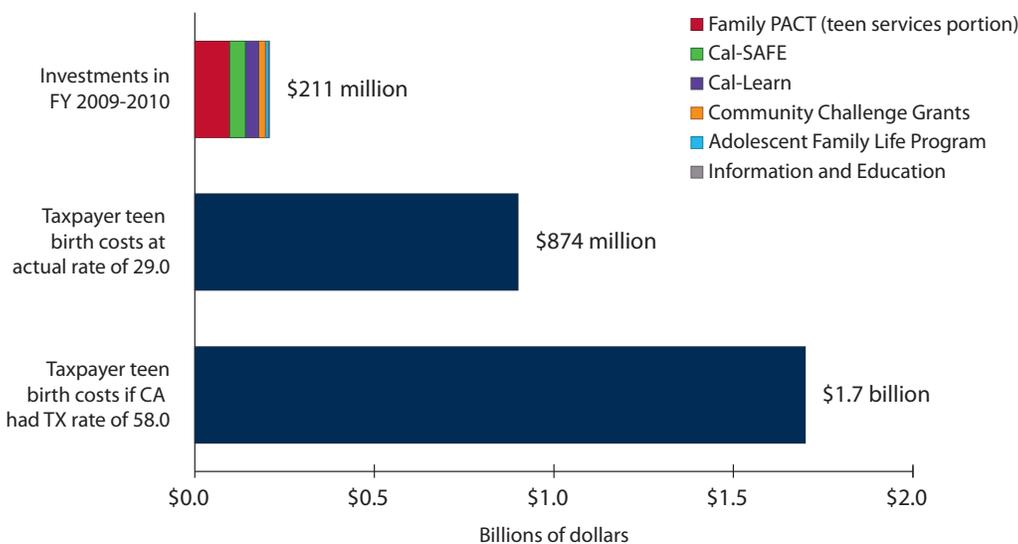


Figure 4. Teen Pregnancy Prevention Investments and Taxpayer Costs Savings in California, 2010

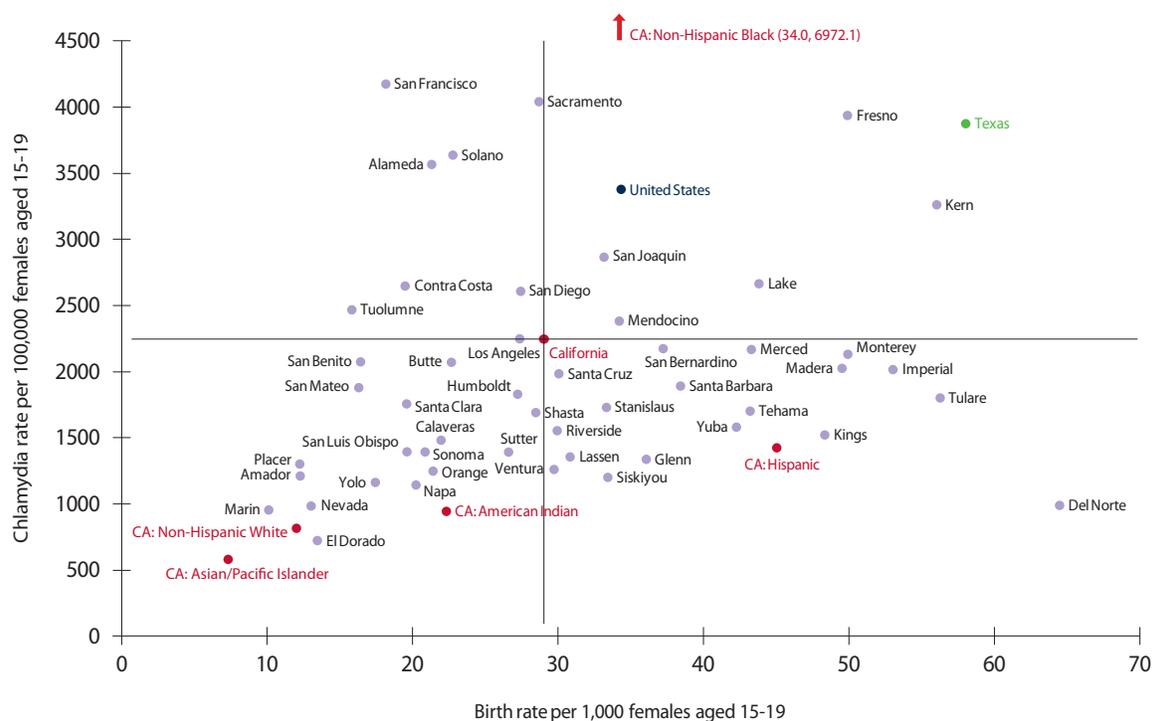


Figure 5. Teen Birth Rates by Female Teen Chlamydia Rates for California Counties, 2010

Moreover, many of the most common contraceptive methods do not protect against STDs. It is possible that in the counties with a low teen birth rate but high chlamydia and gonorrhea rates, female teens are more likely to use highly effective contraceptive methods (i.e., injectibles, implants, and intrauterine devices, and even oral contraceptives) but less likely to also use condoms, thus preventing pregnancies but not STDs.

These racial/ethnic disparities together with the largely independent patterns of teen birth rates and STD rates illustrate the complexity of promoting complete adolescent sexual and reproductive health. All adolescent-serving state, county, and community agencies should be addressing these challenges simultaneously, including the promotion of dual protection use (e.g., condoms and hormonal methods together).



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Using the same approach for calculating birth rates than the California Department of Public Health (CDPH) uses, we calculated teen birth rates for California as a whole and its counties based on number of teen births reported in the CDPH Vital Statistics Query System and the most recent estimates of the female teen population prepared by the California Department of Finance (DOF). As we used the most recent population estimates, the rates we report for 1991-2004 might differ slightly from the rates reported earlier by CDPH for these years. The Texas rate for 2010 was estimated. Further details on our methods are available from <http://teenbirths.phi.org/NTFC-May2012Methods.pdf>.

Although 2010 Census population data are available for state and counties, the rates for California and its counties that we report are not based on the latest Census population estimates. In calculating rates, the CDPH relies on population estimates that have been calculated by the DOF, which are based on the 2000 Census and also include adjustments that are specific to California. The DOF expects to release updated race/ethnicity population estimates by age and sex sometimes in 2013, after which the CDPH, and we, will update the rates to reflect the 2010 Census.