

No Time for Complacency: Teen Births in California

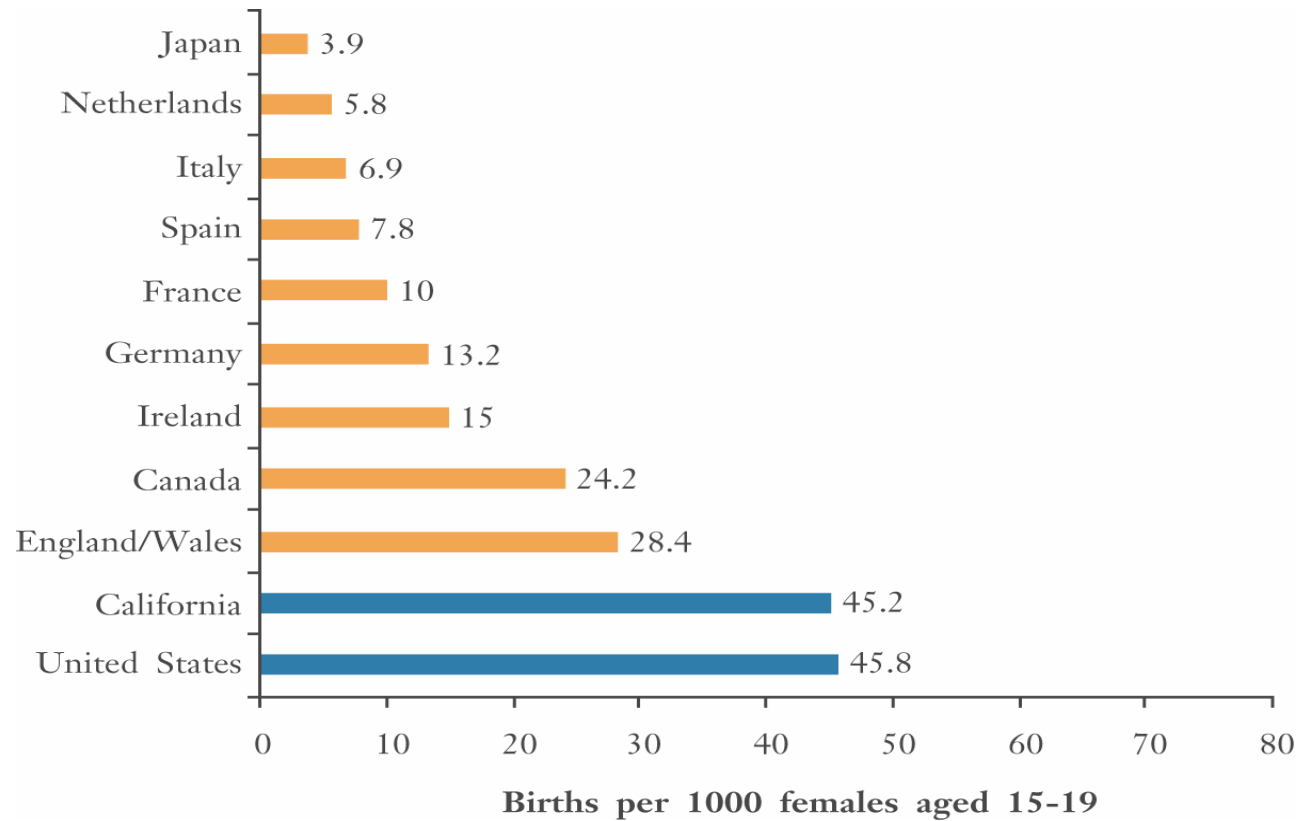
**Norman A. Constantine, PhD
Carmen R. Nevarez, MD, MPH**

**Public Health Institute
Center for Research on Adolescent Health and Development**

Teen Births in California

- More than 53,000 teens aged 15-19, nearly 1 out of 20, gave birth in California in 2001.
- California teen birth rates are higher than rates for every developed country in the world.
- California teen birth rates are between 4 and 12 times higher than rates for France, Spain, Italy, the Netherlands and Japan.

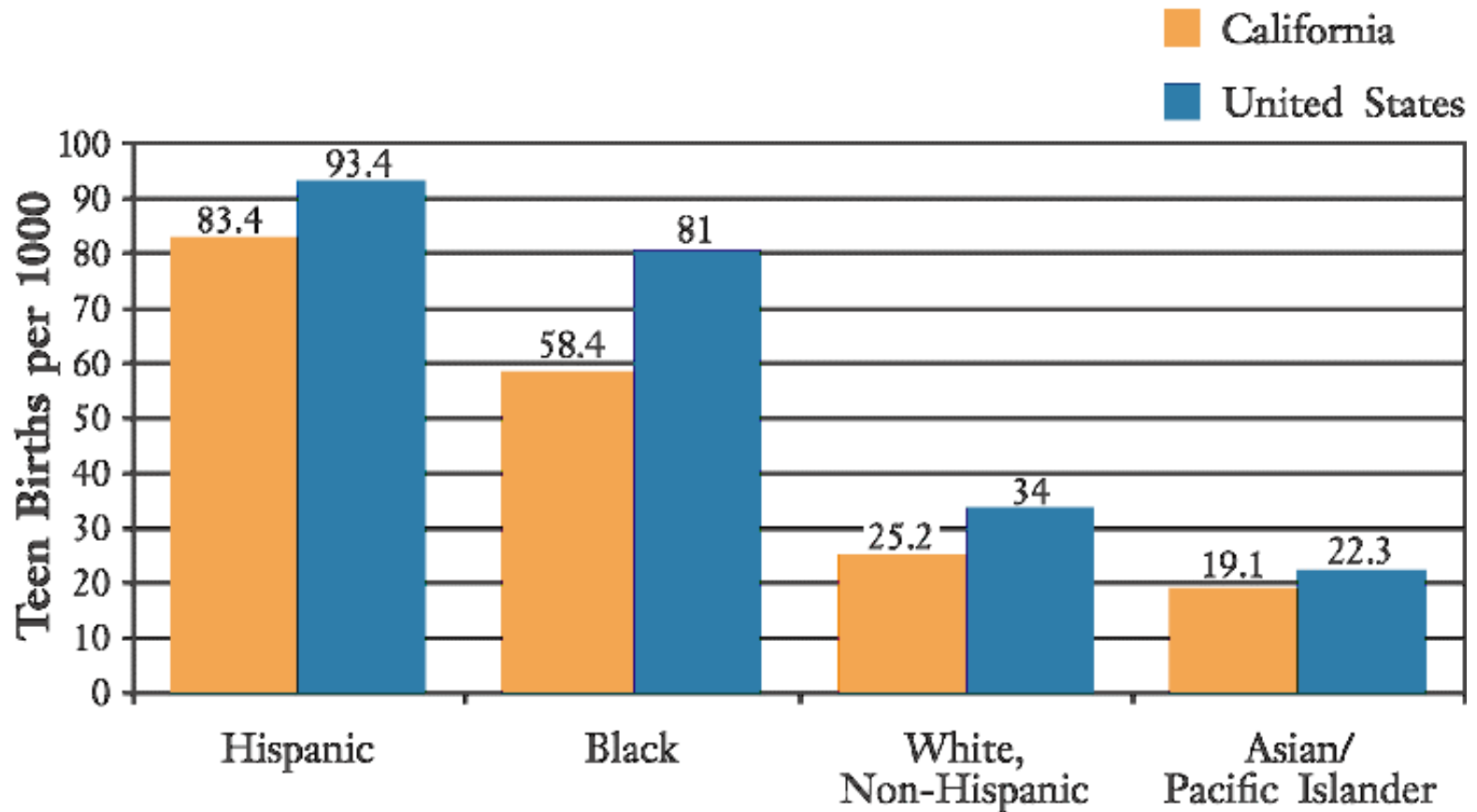
International Comparisons



Group Differences

- The Latina teen birth rate was more than 3 times higher than the white non-Hispanic and Asian/ Pacific Islander rates.
- The African-American rate was more than 2 times higher.

California and US Teen Birth Rates by Race/Ethnicity, 1999



Teen Births in California State Legislative Districts

- In some districts, teen birth rates are as much as twice the overall statewide rate, with 1 in 10 teen girls giving birth.
- Every one of California's 40 state senate districts had higher teen birth rates than Japan (3.6), the Netherlands (5.8), Italy (6.9), France (10.0), Germany (13.2) and Ireland (15.0).

Costs of Teen Child Bearing in California

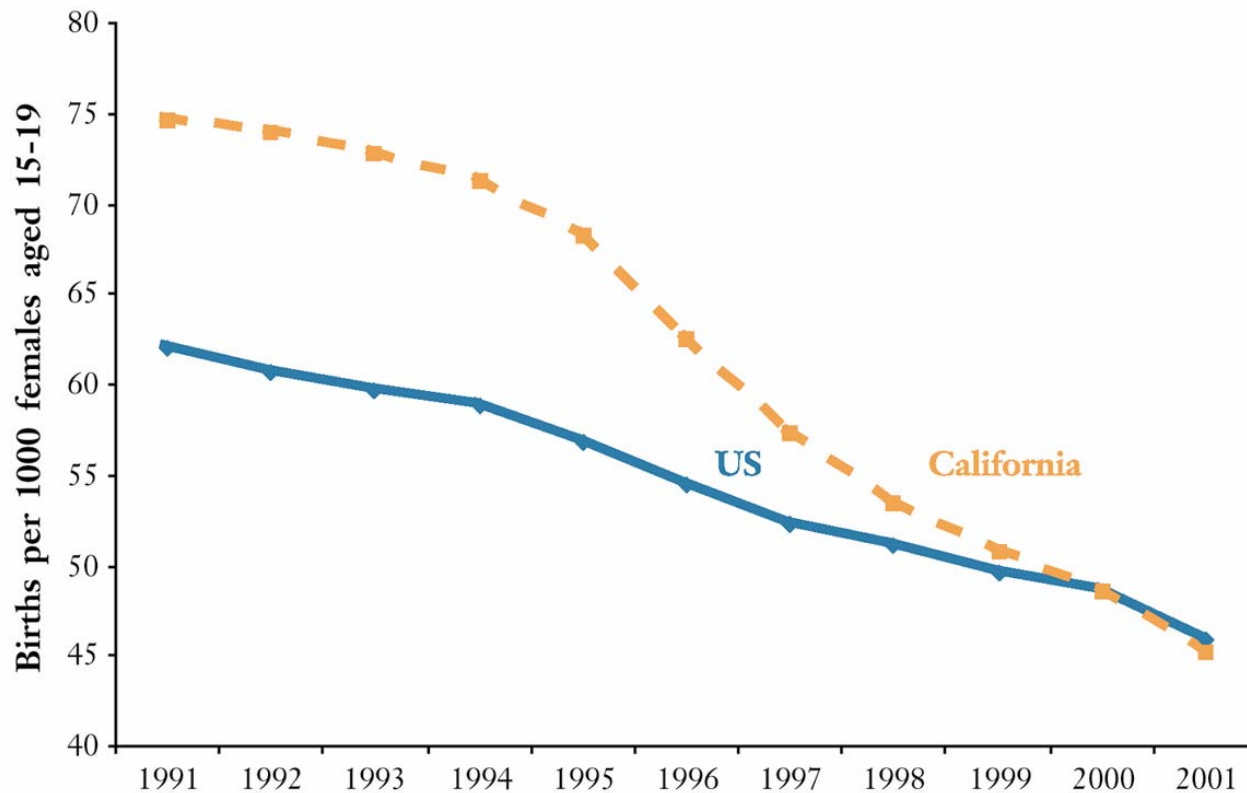
- The current annual cost to taxpayers for all teen births in California is estimated to be \$1.5 billion, and the total annual cost to society is estimated to be \$3.3 billion.
- Annual societal costs of teen births were calculated to range from a low of \$27 million in Senator Ross Johnson's 35th district, to a high of \$192 million in Senator Dean Florez's 16th district.

(Costs represent estimates of annual outlays and losses for 13 yearly cohorts of teen births in the pipeline at any given time. Cost analysis methods are described in detail in the report.)

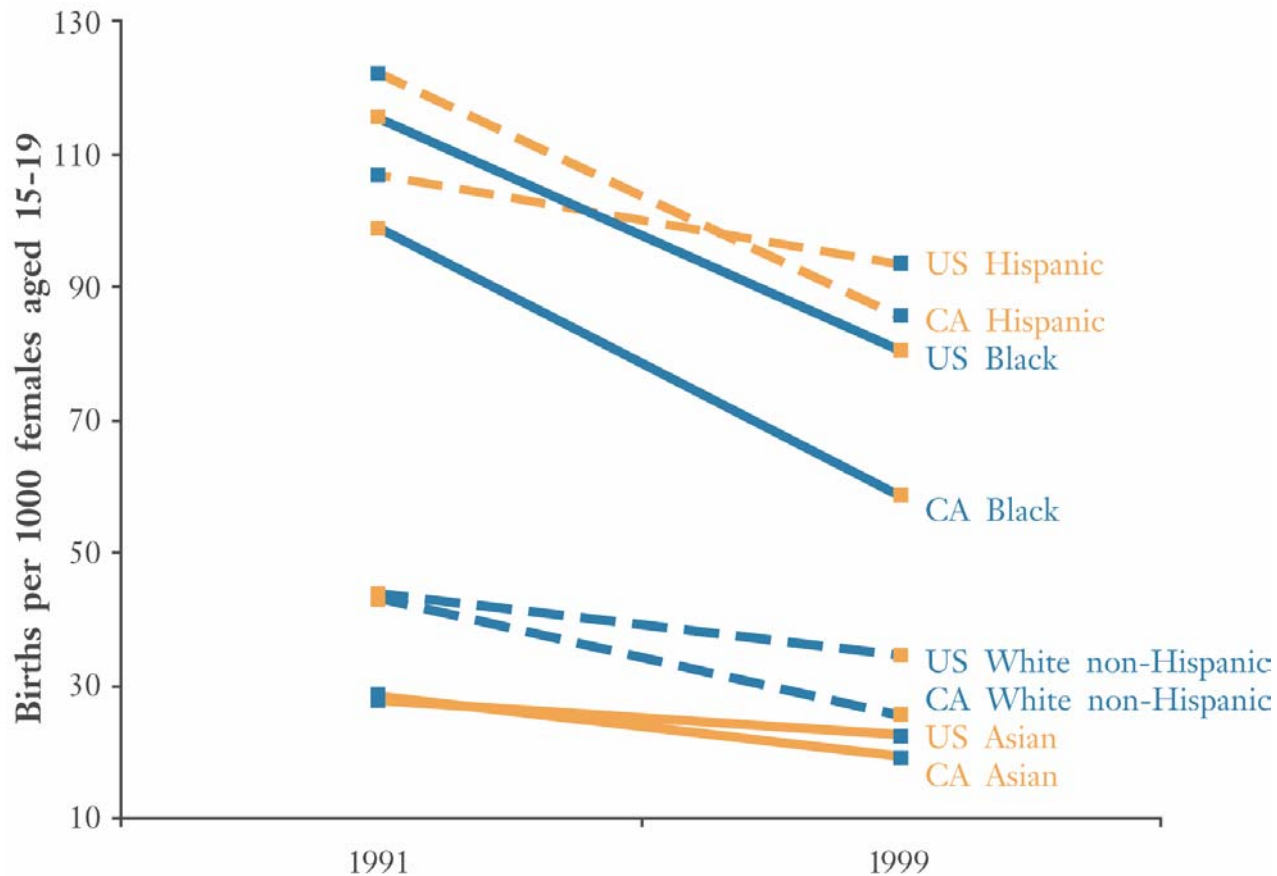
California's Successes

- California's unprecedented investment in teen pregnancy prevention has contributed to the largest absolute reduction, and second largest percentage reduction (after Alaska), in teen birth rates of all 50 states over the last decade.

California vs. US Comparisons



Teen Birth Rates for California and US, 1991 to 1999, by Race/Ethnicity



California's Successes

California's unparalleled 40 percent reduction in its annual teen birth rate over the last decade represents:

- 35,000 fewer teen births in 2001 than the 89,000 that would have occurred had the teen birth rate remained at its 1991 level
- Annual savings to taxpayers of \$968 million
- Total annual savings to society of \$2.2 billion.

Critical Questions

- What has California been doing right?
- What more needs to be done?

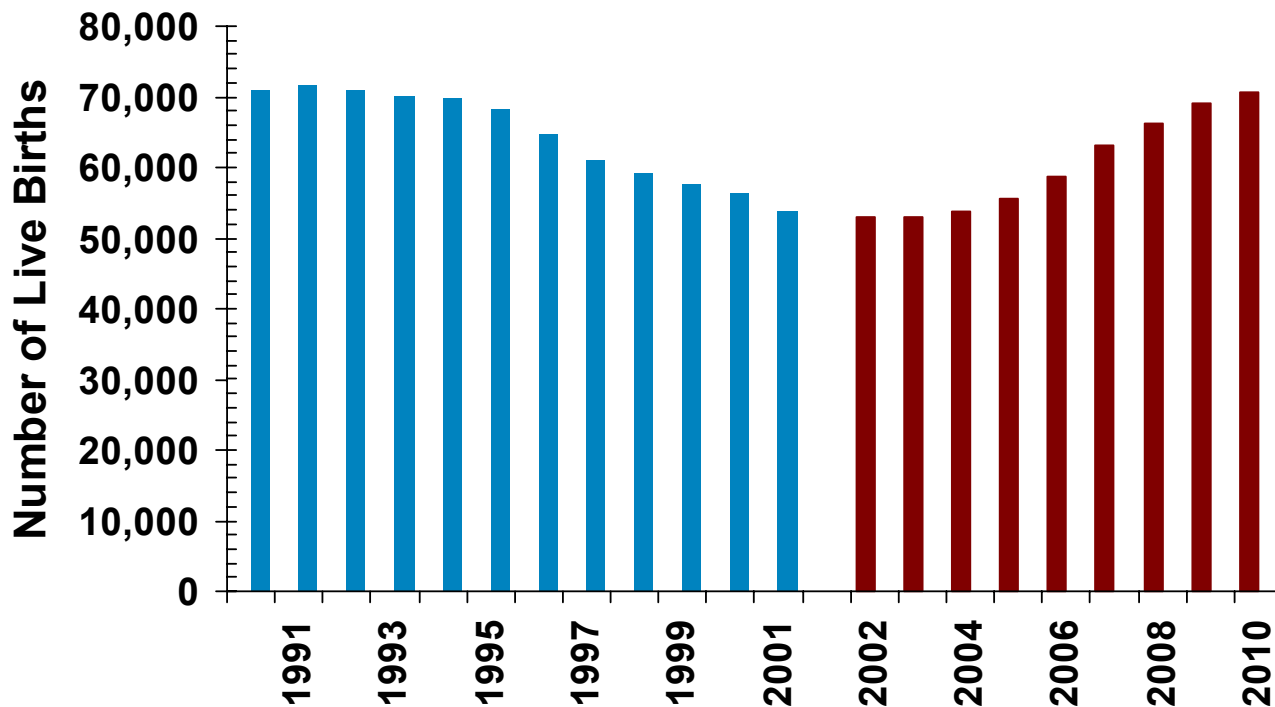
California's Leadership

- Refusal to participate in the federal abstinence-only-until-marriage education program
- State-funded reproductive health programs administered by the California Department of Health Services
- State-funded teen pregnancy prevention programs administered by the California Departments of Health Services and Education
- Program and policy grant initiatives provided by philanthropic foundations in California

Looming Reversals

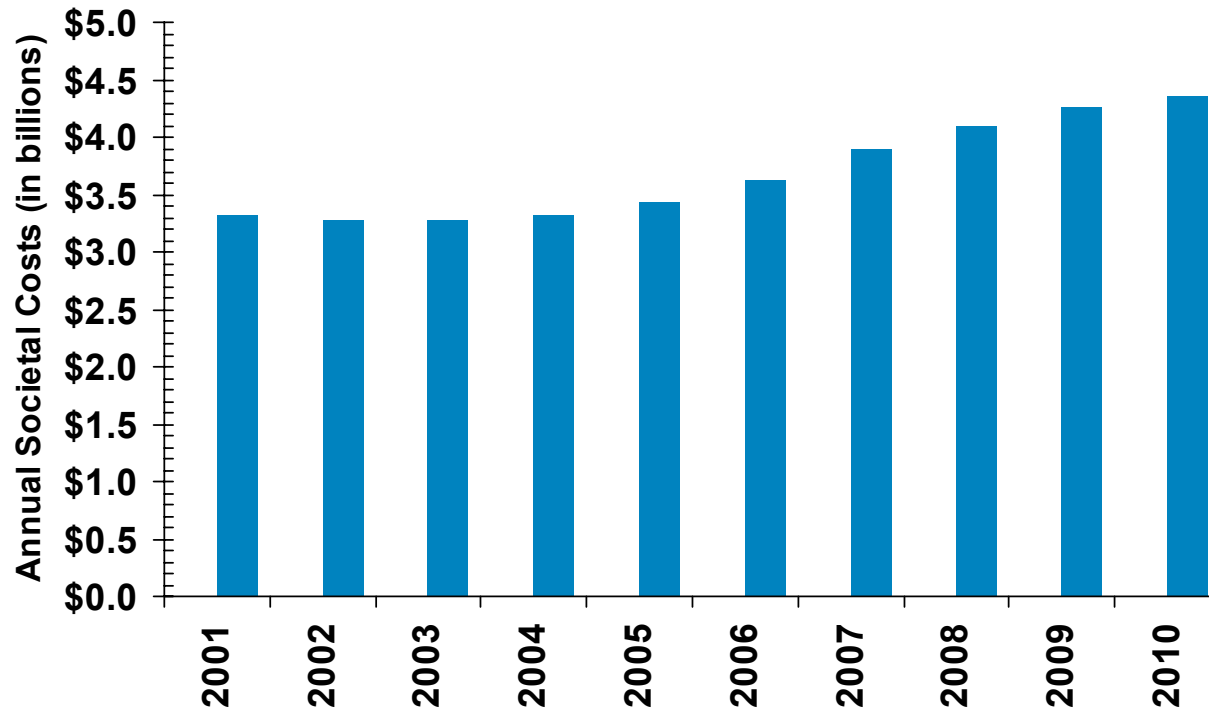
- In spite of California's successes of the last decade, the California Department of Finance predicts that the recent decline in California's teen birth rate will begin to reverse within the next three years.
- This is based solely on California's changing demographics and growth of the teen population

California Teen Births, 1990 to 2010



(1990 – 2001 are historical; 2002 – 2010 are California Department of Finance projections)

Projected Societal Costs in California, 2001 to 2010



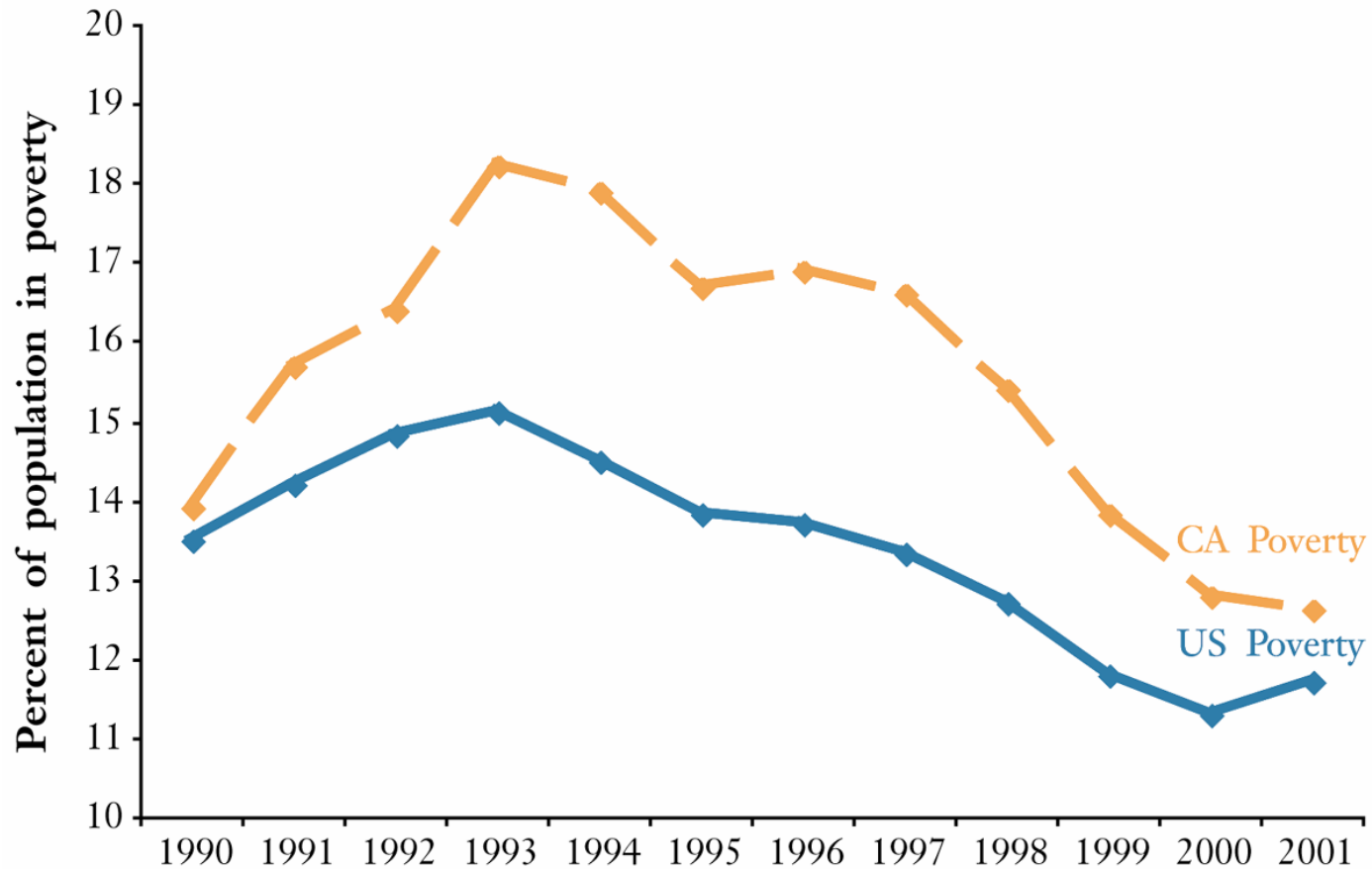
(Number of teen births are California Department of Finance projections; dollars are year 2000 dollars, in billions)

Additional Risk Factors

- Due to rising poverty levels, California's teen birth rate decline may have already begun to reverse in 2002.
- Due to severe state budget situation, effective programs are in danger of losing funds.

Poverty Rates

California and US, 1990 to 2001



Recommendations: Programs

- At a minimum, all program funding aimed at reducing teen pregnancies and births must be maintained.
- Continue to decline participation in and contribution of matching funds for the federal abstinence-only-until-marriage education program.
- Continue to fund effective school- and community-based programs that provide education, outreach, and services to support teens in delaying childbearing.

Recommendations: Leadership

- Elected officials step up to the plate and initiate community dialogues by bringing together parents, adolescents, and other school and community stakeholders to address the issue of high teen birth rates and to determine what additional steps can be taken.

Recommendations: Educational Policy

- Provide for enforcement of existing education standards that require medically accurate information to be taught in school-based sexuality education programs.
- Revise and strengthen California Education Code to clarify and consolidate the minimal standards for comprehensive sexuality education instruction.
- Begin discussion and development of a legislative mandate for California public middle schools, high schools, and alternative schools to teach research-based comprehensive sexuality education.
- Support reliable and complete school-based survey research that will elicit scientific understanding of teen health risk behaviors, including sexual risk behaviors.

Recommendations: Schools and Communities

- Schools and communities provide multi-level comprehensive sexuality education and youth development programs, with school, parent, youth, and community components working in synergy.
- Schools and communities review and monitor school policies and curricula to assess compliance with California Education Code, and to bring these policies and curricula into compliance as necessary.

Further information

Presentation based on:

Constantine, N. A. and Nevarez, C. R. (2003). *No Time for Complacency: Teen Births in California*. Berkeley, CA: Public Health Institute.

The full report, executive summary, senate district summaries, and various other supporting materials are available at:

<http://teenbirths.phi.org>

About the Report

"This study gives every legislator a definitive picture of the impact that teen pregnancies are having on their districts and their constituents. This is an issue that all legislators must continue to take seriously."

--Assembly Majority Floor Leader Marco Antonio Firebaugh, Chair of the California Latino Legislative Caucus.