

Teen mothers are at greater risk of not finishing high school, of being unemployed, depending on public assistance and living in poverty than women who delay childbearing. Their children are at greater risk of poor health, abuse and neglect, growing up poor, doing poorly in school and dropping out, and repeating the cycle of teen parenthood. Adolescents' family backgrounds are associated with their risk of becoming teen parents. The odds of becoming a teen parent are inversely associated with SES.

U.S. teen births rates have declined recently but remain high compared to other developed countries and are still high among African Americans and Latinas. Although racial/ethnic rates are well-known, there is less information on the overall patterns within sociodemographic strata over time.

The sociodemographic profiles of adolescents have changed over time. Educational attainment of women has risen while the proportion of children raised in stable, two-parent families has declined. Thus, children born in the early 1960s were more likely to be raised by both parents but to have a less educated mother than children born in the early 1980s. The goal of this study is to address the role of these changes in the pattern of teen fertility rates over time by retrospectively following consecutive cohorts of women to estimate the risk of a teen birth for each cohort. The following research questions are posed:

- 1) What are the patterns of family sociodemographic (SD) predictors of teen fertility across birth cohorts?
- 2) What is the pattern of the risk of a teen birth within SD strata across birth cohorts?
- 3) What role does the change in SD predictors play in the change in the risk of a teen birth across birth cohorts?
- 4) Have gaps in the risk of a birth across SD subgroups narrowed, increased or remained the same across birth cohorts?

Data for this study are from the 1995, 2002 and 2006-2008 waves of the National Survey of Family Growth (NSFG). Five five-year birth cohorts of female respondents were constructed from the combined waves. The study sample includes respondents who were age 20 or older at time of interview so that their teen fertility risk period occurred before the interview. The outcome for the analyses is first birth by the 20th birthday.

Most items in the NSFG measure respondents' situation at time of interview but several address her family background. This study used three of these variables: education of the respondent's mother; age at first birth of her mother and the family structure in which she was raised.

Bivariate analyses estimate the distribution of family SD factors across birth cohorts and the percent of women in each SD category in each birth cohort who had a teen birth. The first logistic regression model estimates the changes in the odds of a teen birth across the five cohorts within SD strata. The next multivariate analyses are separate models for each birth cohort and estimate the differences in the odds of a teen birth between SD categories within cohorts.

Table 1 presents patterns for the three SD predictors of teen fertility across the five birth cohorts. The proportion of women born to mothers who did not finish or go beyond high school declined steadily across the birth cohorts. Only 13.4% of women born in the early 1960s had a college-educated mother; 24.7% of those born in the early 1980s did. The percentage of women who

grew up with both biological/adoptive parents declined, albeit not steadily, from 68.8% of those born 1961-1965 to 61.7% of those born 1981-1985. Finally, the percent of women in each birth cohort born to a teen mother was fairly stable between 1961 and 1980, then declined to 31.3% among those born in the early 1980s.

Table 1. Family Sociodemographic Factors by Respondents' Birth Cohort

Birth Cohort:	1961-1965	1966-1970	1971-1975	1976-1980	1981-1985
Mother's Education					
<High school	28.4	26.5	25.7	22.1	18.7
High school	42.5	39.5	36.0	31.5	31.6
Some college	15.6	18.2	19.6	25.8	25.0
College degree	13.4	15.8	18.7	20.7	24.7
Family Structure Growing Up					
Always 2 parents	68.8	65.3	61.5	58.1	61.7
All others	31.2	34.7	38.5	41.9	38.3
Mother's Age at 1st Birth					
<20 years old	37.9	38.5	35.2	37.3	31.3
≥20 years old	62.1	61.5	64.8	62.7	68.7

The overall teen birth rate peaked among the cohort born in the late 1970s at 22.2% then declined to rates similar to those born in the 1960s (Table 2). For each cohort, the percent of women with a teen birth declined as maternal education rose. Among women whose mothers had not finished college, the percent with a teen birth was higher among the most recent cohort than among those born in the 1960s. The percent of women who grew up with both parents with a teen birth remained stable across cohorts whereas the teen birth rate among women who grew up in other circumstances increased across cohorts to peak in the 1976-1980 cohort before declining to previous levels. A similar pattern exists for women born to women who were teen mothers versus those whose first birth occurred later. The percentage of daughters of adult mothers who became teen mothers remained relatively steady across the cohorts. Their rates were never more than half of the daughters of teen mothers, whose rates were highest among those born in the late 1970s.

Table 2. Percent of Women with a Birth by Age 20 by Family Sociodemographic Factors and Birth Cohort

Birth Cohort:	1961-1965	1966-1970	1971-1975	1976-1980	1981-1985
Mother's Education					
<High school	31.1	28.9	33.1	30.9	35.5
High school	15.6	18.6	19.8	29.1	21.1
Some college	10.2	10.5	15.3	17.3	17.0
College degree	8.2	3.8	8.6	10.8	6.1
Family Structure Growing Up					
Always 2 parents	14.3	14.8	15.2	14.1	13.9
All others	26.8	23.1	28.9	34.8	26.1
Mother's Age at 1st Birth					
<20 years old	27.4	26.2	30.9	36.1	30.4
≥20 years old	12.2	12.5	15.0	13.6	13.4
Total					
	18.2	17.5	20.2	22.2	18.4

Table 3 presents the proportion of total teen births in each cohort from each SD category. This percent is a product of the proportion of the population in a given category (Table 1) and the percent of women in that category who had a teen birth (Table 2). For each of the family SD measures, the lower category accounts for a greater proportion of total births than of population whereas the higher category accounts for a lesser proportion of births than their proportion of the population.

Table 3. Percent of Births by Age 20 Due to Each Family SD Category within Birth Cohorts

Birth Cohort:	1961-1965	1966-1970	1971-1975	1976-1980	1981-1985
Mother's Education					
<High school	48.6	43.7	42.0	28.9	36.3
High school	36.5	42.0	35.2	39.5	37.2
Some college	8.8	10.9	14.8	20.8	18.4
College degree	6.1	3.4	8.0	10.8	8.1
Family Structure Growing Up					
Always 2 parents	53.8	54.8	45.6	37.9	47.3
All others	46.2	45.2	54.4	62.1	52.7
Mother's Age at 1st Birth					
<20 years old	57.8	56.8	52.8	61.4	49.5
≥20 years old	42.2	43.2	47.2	38.6	50.5

Table 4 presents the results of a logistic regression model predicting a teen birth by cohort across SD levels. There was no change in the risk of a teen birth among the daughters of women who did not finish high school across birth cohorts, that is, there are uniformly high rates among women born across 25 years. Among those whose mothers finished high school, those born 1976-1980 have significantly higher odds of a birth than those born before them. A similar but less significant pattern was found for the daughters of women with some college. The daughters of college graduates born in the late 1960s had less than half the risk of those born earlier in the 1960s or in the 1970s.

Table 4. Odds of Women Having a Birth by Age 20 by Family SD Factors and Birth Cohort

Birth Cohort:	1961-1965	1966-1970	1971-1975	1976-1980	1981-1985
Mother's Education					
<High school	1.00	0.82	0.97	0.86	1.02
High school	1.00	1.16 ^a	1.18 ^a	1.86 ^{***}	1.31
Some college	1.00	1.04	1.54	1.64 ⁺	1.30
College degree	1.00	0.45 [*]	1.11 ^b	1.36 ^b	0.79
Family Structure Growing Up					
Always 2 parents	1.00	1.06	1.14	1.06	1.16
All others	1.00	0.80 ^a	1.13 ^{ab}	1.76 ^{**}	1.10 ^a
Mother's Age at 1st Birth					
<20 years old	1.00	0.91 ^a	1.03 ^a	1.55 ^{**}	1.08
≥20 years old	1.00	1.02	1.31 [*]	1.18	1.23
-2ll	1403.1				
N	14,152				

⁺p≤0.10; *p≤0.05; **p≤0.01; ***p≤0.001

^aSG different from 1976-80; ^bSG different from 1966-70

Women who grew up with both parents had uniformly low odds of a teen birth across the cohorts. In comparison, the odds of women who grew up in other circumstances were highest for those born 1976-1980. Women born in the early 1970s had greater odds of a birth than those born in the 1960s but lower odds than those born in the late 1970s. Among women whose mothers were at least 20 years old before giving birth, those born in the early 1970s were more likely to become teen mothers than those born in the early 1960s. Among the daughters of teen mothers, those born 1976-1980 were more likely than those born earlier to have become teen mothers themselves.

Table 5 presents the results of logistic regressions for each birth cohort predicting the odds of a teen birth. Net of other factors, the odds of a teen birth for daughters of mothers with at least some college were significantly lower than for those with less-educated mothers. The 1976-1980 cohort deviates from the pattern of other cohorts due to a steep rise in birth rates among teens whose mothers were high school graduates (Table 2). For each cohort, women who did not grow up with both parents and those whose mothers were teen mothers were more likely to become teen mothers than their counterparts. This gap was widest for the 1976-1980 cohort; the higher risk of these women drove the overall higher birth rates seen for this cohort. Otherwise, the gaps in the odds for these two measures were steady across birth cohorts.

Table 5. Logistic Regression Models Predicting the Odds of a Teen Birth within Cohorts

Birth Cohort:	1961-1965	1966-1970	1971-1975	1976-1980	1981-1985
Mother's Education					
<High school	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
High school	0.53***	0.75	0.59**	1.42 ⁺	0.80
Some college	0.33*** ^a	0.41*** ^a	0.48**	0.79 ^a	0.49*** ^a
College degree	0.27*** ^a	0.16*** ^{ab}	0.28*** ^{ab}	0.64 ^{†a}	0.24*** ^a
Family Structure Growing Up					
Always 2 parents	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
All others	1.78***	1.42*	1.95***	2.96***	1.99***
Mother's Age at 1st Birth					
<20 years old	1.75***	1.60**	1.50**	2.67***	1.65*
≥20 years old	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
-2ll (9)	378.2	354.8	303.0	331.2	135.6
N	3,670	3,606	3,422	2,149	1,305

[†]p≤0.10; *p≤0.05; **p≤0.01; ***p≤0.001

^aSG different from High School; ^bSG different from Some College