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Title

Changes in the Proximate Determinants of Teenage Childbearing in the U.S., 1995–2015

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Abstract

The teen birth rate in the U.S. has fallen almost continuously every year since 1991 and is currently at a historic low. Researchers have focused on increased and improved use of contraceptive use to explain this decline, largely dismissing the role played by changing sexual behavior. Using data from all cycles of the National Survey of Family Growth between 1995 and 2015 to capture multiple, nuanced measures of contraceptive method use and sexual activity left out of prior work, this research takes a closer look at these key proximate determinants of fertility decline and adjusts an existing pregnancy risk index to account for these measures. This research also asks whether observed shifts in contraceptive use and sexual activity were equally experienced across sociodemographic subgroups of the teen population. Results suggest that a single explanation for declines in teen childbearing is unlikely to be appropriate for diverse populations of teens.