

# Teenage pregnancy

[Family](#), [Teenage Pregnancy](#)



Becoming a mother in her teenage years is not an ideal situation for most young women. Young adults in this age bracket are still growing, physically and emotionally, and are not always as equipped to handle adult situations as they might think. Teen mothers face adult responsibilities even before they give birth, and the obligations continue for years down the road. Teenage pregnancy in developed countries is usually outside of marriage, and carries a social stigma in many communities and cultures, which ultimately takes a huge toll on adolescent mothers as there are many pressures put on her to resort to abortion, something that is potentially harming psychologically and physically. Additionally, this social stigma furthers the negative judgment from the surrounding people in the teen mother's life including friends, family, teachers, employers, and strangers; this negative judgment may include a great deal of prejudice placed on the mother, implying their promiscuity, and the assumptions that they will get into drugs, and resort to welfare. Furthermore, teenage pregnancy and parenting interfere with education, resulting in limited employment options and difficulties earning the great deal of money needed for the additional costs of raising a child. The need to sacrifice many social opportunities that coincide with adolescence arises, as well as the challenges in keeping up with friends that are on completely different life paths than the teen mother. Also, difficulties maintaining stable relationships with the father of the child, and family members of the pregnant/parenting teenager emerge. Social stigma is the extreme disapproval of, or discontent with, a person on socially characteristic grounds that are perceived, and serve to distinguish them, from other members of a society. Stigma may then be affixed to such a

person, by the greater society, who differs from their cultural norms. This can be applied to the issue of teenage pregnancy and parenting in a variety of ways. Many pregnant teenagers are often pressured to refer to the option of abortion, which is an initial challenge they face that, can result in confusion and stress. Amy R. Sobie and David C. Reardon state in their research, “ Detrimental Effects of Adolescent Abortion” that studies have shown that the major factors in pregnancy decision making among teens are the attitude of the teen’s parents, the baby’s father, her peers, and the cultural and public policy attitudes toward abortion by which she is surrounded. Essentially, compared to older women, teens are more likely to abort because of pressure from their parents or sexual partners, putting them at higher risk for adverse psychological effects after abortion. Additionally, teens are also more likely to report having wanted to keep the baby, higher levels of feeling misinformed in pre-abortion counseling, less satisfaction with abortion services and greater post-abortion stress. As a result, they consider the abortion procedure itself to be stressful and associated with feelings of guilt, depression, and a sense of isolation. Researchers have also found that reports of more severe pain during abortion among younger women are linked to greater levels of anxiety and fear prior to the abortion (Reardon & Sobie, 2001). Therefore, it is evidently proven that a challenge within the social stigma of teenage pregnancy is the pressure placed on pregnant teens of choosing abortion. Reardon and Sobie also describe the damaging effects of this pressure, which ultimately contributes to the overall difficulties a pregnant young woman face. Generally, teenage pregnancy is unplanned, and out of wedlock. Social

stigmas about pregnancy have been around for decades, even centuries. “ Parent Profiles” is an online organization dedicated to helping birth mothers find the right adoptive family for their child. An article entitled “ Dealing with Social Stigmas” suggests that history has shown that many unwed mothers were physically punished or ostracized from and by their families or communities. These women were ridiculed and mocked by peers and leaders. Unfortunately, even in modern times, many teenagers who experience unplanned pregnancies are treated similarly, in their homes, schools, and religious congregations. Instead of people trying to help or lend support to these teenagers in need, they are teased and are the subjects of excessive gossip because of the many social stigmas still attached to teenage pregnancy (“ Dealing with Social Stigmas”, n. d.). As a result of this negative judgment, pregnant teenagers can be shunned from certain social groups within school, and can face difficulties finding an employer who will not think negatively of her, as well as a religious institution that will support her pregnancy, especially out of wedlock. Along with the negative judgment that coincides with teenage pregnancy, there is a great deal of prejudice about pregnant and parenting adolescent girls. In a BBC News Magazine article entitled “ Why Such a Downer on Teenage Pregnancy? ” author Finlo Rohrer implies that the social stigma surrounding teenage pregnancy is “ because we [society] don't like the thought of kids having sex. There's almost an entrenched cultural stumbling block that spills over into how parents talk to their children.” And so pregnant teenagers receive negative reactions, he says. “ The initial response is one of horror and shame and it makes the kids feel terrible. They meet prejudice on every single corner.

Going down the road looking pregnant, people looking at them in a hateful way. They are seen as feckless and promiscuous when all it is is kids that are brought into the teenage world under-prepared and incredibly ignorant. We let them watch it on television but we don't talk about it." This brings about the issue that society may deem pregnant adolescents as "promiscuous" and irresponsible, but in reality, the real issue is the lack of proper parental guidance. He furthers his opinion on the topic of prejudice by listing common misconceptions about teenage mothers. They include: teenage mothers are less educated than other mothers, they come from broken homes, they are all welfare recipients, they do not have a strong father figure, and most of them end up addicted to drugs or alcohol (Rohrer, 2008). While some of these stereotypes may be true, it is certainly not the case for all pregnant and parenting young women, however; the fact that society places these prejudices on them is a serious challenge that they face and can result in a great deal of lost opportunities. Pregnant and parenting teens have a hard time establishing a prosperous and fulfilling life for themselves as it is difficult to maintain good grades in school, that is if they can manage to maintain their attendance. This results in difficulties finding a well-paid job, and without a well-paid job comes financial difficulties in receiving the additional costs needed for raising a child. According to StayTeen.org, more than half of teen mothers never graduate from high school, and fewer than two percent have graduated from college by the time they are thirty years old ("Stay Informed: Teen Pregnancy", n. d.). High school prepares adolescents for responsibility later in life. A teen mom already faces huge responsibilities, but may not have all of the tools needed to navigate through

some of life's challenges if she drops out before graduation. The social outlet that school provides for the mother is important as well; a teen parent who is isolated from her peers may be more likely to become depressed and withdrawn, which will affect her child as well (Roth, 2010). The biggest financial issue teen mothers face is that having a baby so young reduces their opportunities to finish school and get advanced education or job training. This inevitably results in teen pregnancy being closely linked to poverty and single parenthood. An article entitled " Teen Pregnancy — So what? " by the National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy states that a 1990 study showed that almost one-half of all teenage mothers and over three-quarters of unmarried teen mothers began receiving welfare within five years of the birth of their first child. The growth in single-parent families remains the single most important reason for increased poverty among children over the last twenty years (National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy, 2004). Essentially, the inability to get a well-paying job as a result of the lack of schooling is a main contributor to teenage mother's financial problems, as well as the fact that there is rarely dual income as a result of an unsupportive father, or similar to the mother, he may not have the best education or a well-paid job to contribute enough money. A huge challenge many adolescent mothers face is the absence of the child's father and his unwillingness to support their child. In their research entitled, " Mother's Satisfaction with Father Involvement", Ambika K. Krishnakumar and Maureen M. Black discuss the role in which a father should assume in his child's life. The notion of father involvement should address his commitment and interest in the well being of their children and include parental

behaviours and extend beyond the provision of financial support to include participation in care giving and involvement in decision-making activities. Although many fathers of infants born to adolescent mothers express a desire to be involved with their children, involvement varies and often decreases over time, particularly if the parents do not maintain a romantic relationship (Black & Krishnakumar, 2003). This research implies that even though teenage mothers may receive the financial support from the father of their child, the emotional support is often lacking, which can oftentimes result in even more stress for the young mother. For a teen mother who was previously engaged in social activities, it might be a shocking change to suddenly be unable to participate in many extracurricular activities. The amount of isolation that she feels can be directly related to the involvement of the baby's father or other family members. With a lot of financial help or offers to help with the baby, some teen moms are still able to enjoy a social life and can see friends or participate in activities on a semi-regular basis; however, most teen moms find themselves overwhelmed by their new lifestyle and will have to work to make new friends that they have more in common with (Welton, 2013). Additionally, the typical adolescent lifestyle requires changes, for example, activities with drinking or smoking are no longer an option, and the extra rest needed in pregnancy can cut back on the energy available for time spent with friends. Finally, the high stress levels that come with anticipating the new baby can make it difficult to enjoy extracurricular activities. Teenage pregnancy can also cause family stress and frequent arguments between the mother and her parents. Susan S. Bartell discusses this issue in her research, " Teen Pregnancy: The Impact on

a Family System" in which she compares supportive and unsupportive parents. For a minority of parents, the pregnancy will be welcomed as a positive addition to the family or as a rite of passage for the teenager, into adulthood. In most cases though, once the initial shock wears off, the pregnancy will be viewed as deeply troubling, and reflective of a teenager gone badly awry. The emotional struggles as to whether to terminate the pregnancy or not, and then later, as to where to keep the baby or not, will continue in the family until resolution is reached. This could take weeks, or months, resulting in enormous emotional upheaval, particularly if the teen and her parents do not see eye-to-eye on the resolution (Bartell, 2005). Furthermore, most teens are not equipped to support themselves, and they are even less able to support an infant. The teens' parents often end up providing at least some financial support for the baby, which can cause hardship and strain on the relationship between them, especially in lower-income families. Overall, the issues of teenage pregnancy and parenting further the issue of families with children under stress because through a great deal of research and investigation, it is proven that adolescent mothers face a great deal of challenges from the moment they find out they are pregnant, to the duration of time spent parenting. Teen mothers are faced with a social stigma that includes negative judgment and prejudice, which condemns teenage pregnancy and consequently the young women will feel isolated and depressed. It is also proven that they are succumbed to a great deal of pressure to choose the option of abortion, which can cause major psychological stress. The biggest financial issue teen mothers face is that having a baby so young reduces their opportunities to finish school and get



advanced education or job training. Significant numbers of teen mothers drop out of school, never get married and live in poverty relying on public assistance most of their lives. Oftentimes the father of their baby may not be fully supportive whether it is in regards to finances, or emotional involvement. Being a teen mother also prevents a young woman to fulfill her desires as a typical teenager with friends, social activities, and extra curricular activities, and strains the relationship between her and her parents.

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