

## Infants Born at High Risk

### DEFINITION

This indicator measures the percentage of infants born to New Hampshire teens ages 14 to 19 who were unmarried and who had not completed high school at the time of their infant's birth. The data include births to mothers who were residents of New Hampshire at the time of delivery, regardless of the state in which the birth occurred (NHVRIN 2007-2009).

Although many factors can jeopardise infant well-being, this report uses three factors to define infants born at high risk: the mother's age, marital status, and educational attainment.

### CONTEXT

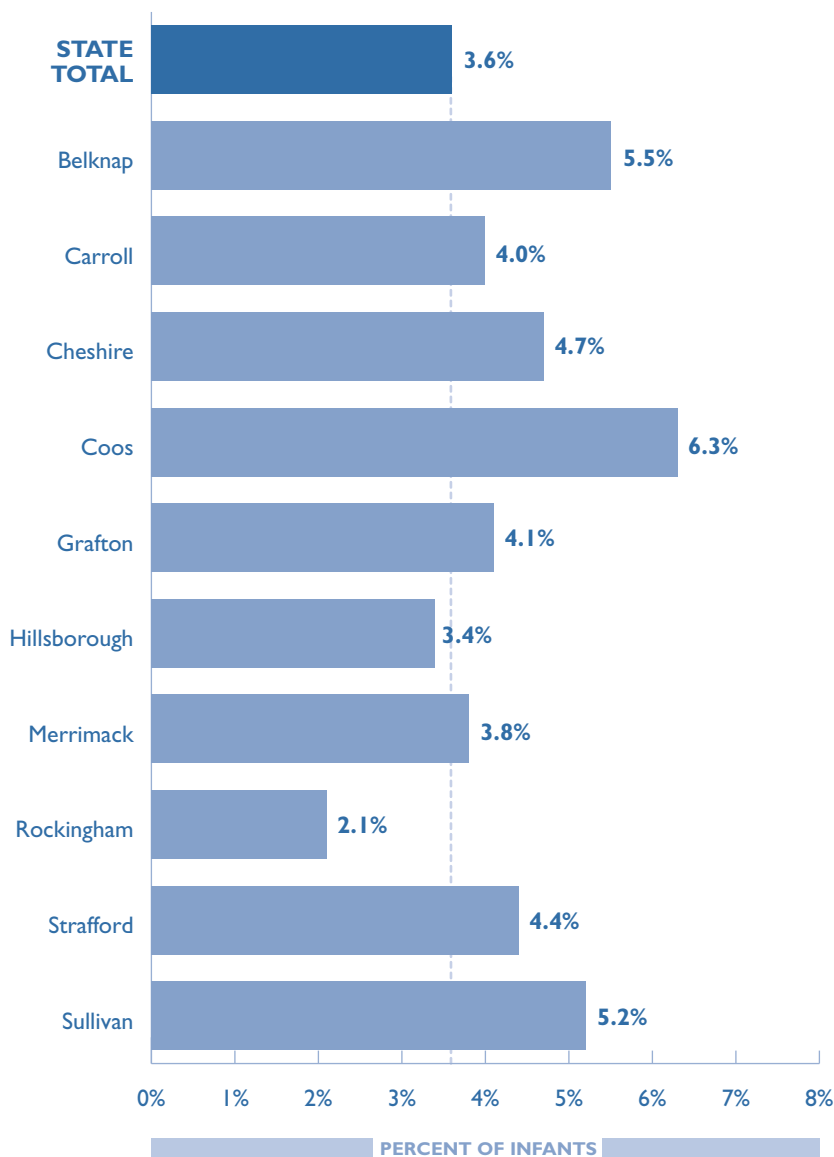
Among developed countries, the United States has the highest rates of teen pregnancy. However, teen birth rates have been on the decline since 1991, increasing briefly between 2005 and 2007 (Annie E. Casey 2009). In 2008, teen birth rates (births per 1,000 teenage girls ages 15-19) in the fifty states ranged from 19.8 births per 1,000 teenage girls in New Hampshire, to 65.7 births per 1,000 teenage girls in the State of Mississippi. Teen birth rates were generally higher in southern and southwestern states (Matthews et. al.).

Teen mothers who have not completed high school are at greater risk for dropping out; only 40 percent of teen moms under 18 finish high school (March of Dimes 2009). Nationally teens account for half of births to unmarried mothers (National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy 2010).

Infants born to single, teen mothers without a high school education in the U.S. are nine times more likely to be poor than infants born to a married, adult mother with at least a high school education. According to one estimate, these at-risk infants have a 64 percent chance of living in poverty (National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy 2010). A March of Dimes report indicates more than three quarters of single teen moms receive welfare benefits within five years of the birth of their first child (March of Dimes 2009).

Teen mothers are at higher risk for preterm birth and low birth weight infants, factors that increase an infant's risk of death, as well as a host of medical and developmental problems both during infancy and over the long term. In general, teens smoke at a higher rate than older mothers and are more likely to receive

**Infants Born at High Risk** (as measured by mother's age, marital status, and education level)  
By County, 2007-2009



late or no prenatal care, further increasing risks to their babies' health (March of Dimes 2009). Children of teen moms are more likely to perform poorly in school and drop out of school. Infants born to teen moms are twice as likely to be abused and neglected and are more likely to themselves become teen parents, get in trouble with the law and be homeless (Annie E. Casey Foundation 2009).

### NEW HAMPSHIRE FINDINGS

New Hampshire has the lowest teen birth rate in the nation. All six New England states are among the bottom ten states in terms of teen pregnancy rates. In 2008, all four states with teen birth rates below 25 percent were in New England. One factor in the variation in teen birth rates across all states is racial diversity since Hispanic and black populations historically have higher birth rates than non-Hispanic white populations. Just looking at births to Hispanic teenagers, New Hampshire's teen birth rate rises but the state still ranks among the lowest five states. The number of births to black New Hampshire teens is too small to calculate a statistically meaningful rate (Matthews et. al.).

From 2007 to 2009, teen births accounted for 6.3 percent of all births to New Hampshire mothers, both married and unmarried. Statewide, births to unmarried mothers of all ages accounted for 32.4 percent of births over the same time period. Births to women of all ages who had not completed high school accounted for 9.5 percent of births.

**Between 2007 and 2009, 3.6 percent of all births to New Hampshire mothers were to unmarried teen mothers who had not completed high school. Rates of infants born at highest risk were generally elevated in the north (6.3 percent of babies in Coos County) and west of the state and lower in southeastern New Hampshire (2.1 percent of babies in Rockingham County). (see chart on previous page)**

### SOURCE OF DATA FOR ILLUSTRATION/METHODOLOGY

New Hampshire Vital Records Information Network Web. 2010. New Hampshire Department of State, Division of Vital Records Administration. <http://nhvriweb.sos.nh.gov>

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