

Child TRENDS[®] RESEARCH BRIEF

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Trends in Hispanic Teen Births: Differences Across States

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O*verview.* Hispanics represent one of the fastest growing segments of the U.S. population, and this rapid growth is projected to be even more dramatic for Hispanic teens. The number of Hispanic teens is projected to increase by 50 percent by 2025, even though the total teen population is expected to increase by only 6 percent in the same time period.¹⁷ Although the teen birth rate is declining for all groups, Hispanic teens have higher birth rates and a slower pace of decline than non-Hispanic black or non-Hispanic white teens.⁷ Thus, Hispanic teens are an important target group for pregnancy prevention programs.

The proportion of the teen population that is Hispanic and the proportion of teen births that occur to Hispanics vary greatly by state. This Research Brief provides state-level information on both trends in the growth of the Hispanic teen population and in the proportion of teen births that occur to Hispanic mothers. This information can help state-level agencies and local program providers address the unique needs of their changing communities. We identify two distinct groups of states: one with an especially high proportion of teen births to Hispanics, and another with a relatively low proportion of teen births to Hispanics but with an especially high rate of growth in Hispanic teen births. These two groups of states face different challenges in their efforts to prevent teen pregnancies in Hispanic communities.

HISPANIC TEENS IN THE NATION

As a group, Hispanics represent one of the youngest and most rapidly growing populations in the United States. One in three Hispanics is under the age of 18,¹⁵ and the Hispanic teen population continues to grow at a faster rate than does the rest of the teen population. In 1990, Hispanics comprised only 11 percent of the teen female population between the ages of 15 and 19; by 2004, that proportion had jumped to 16 percent, representing 1.6 million of the 10.1 million females in the nation in that age group (see Table 3). This change during the 14 years from 1990 to 2004 corresponded to a 45 percent increase in the proportion of the female teen population that was Hispanic. By 2050, almost one-third of the population of 14- to 17-year-olds in the nation is projected to be Hispanic.³

The number of states in which Hispanics comprise more than one-fifth of the teen population is growing. In 1990, Hispanics made up more than 20 percent of the population of 15- to 19-year-old females in only four states: Arizona, California, New Mexico, and Texas. By 2004, Hispanics comprised more than 20 percent of the female population in this age group in seven states. Of the teen female population in these states, 49 percent was Hispanic in New Mexico, 41 percent in California, 38 percent in Texas, 34 percent in Arizona, 27 percent in Nevada, 22 percent in Colorado, and 20 percent in Florida (see Table 3).

States with relatively small numbers of Hispanic teens have experienced large increases in the proportion of their teen populations that is Hispanic. Between 1990 and 2004, the proportion of the 15-to 19-year-old female population that was Hispanic doubled or more than doubled in 23 states. Nearly one-half of these states were located in the South: Alabama, Arkansas, Delaware, Georgia, Indiana, Iowa, Kentucky, Minnesota, Mississippi, Nebraska, Nevada, New Hampshire, North Carolina, North Dakota, Oklahoma, Oregon, Rhode Island, South Carolina, South Dakota, Tennessee, Utah, Vermont, and Virginia (see Table 3). For example, in North Carolina, between 1990 and 2004, the number of Hispanic teen females increased from 2,600—or 1 percent of the state's teen female population—to around 15,000—or 5 percent of the state's teen female population.

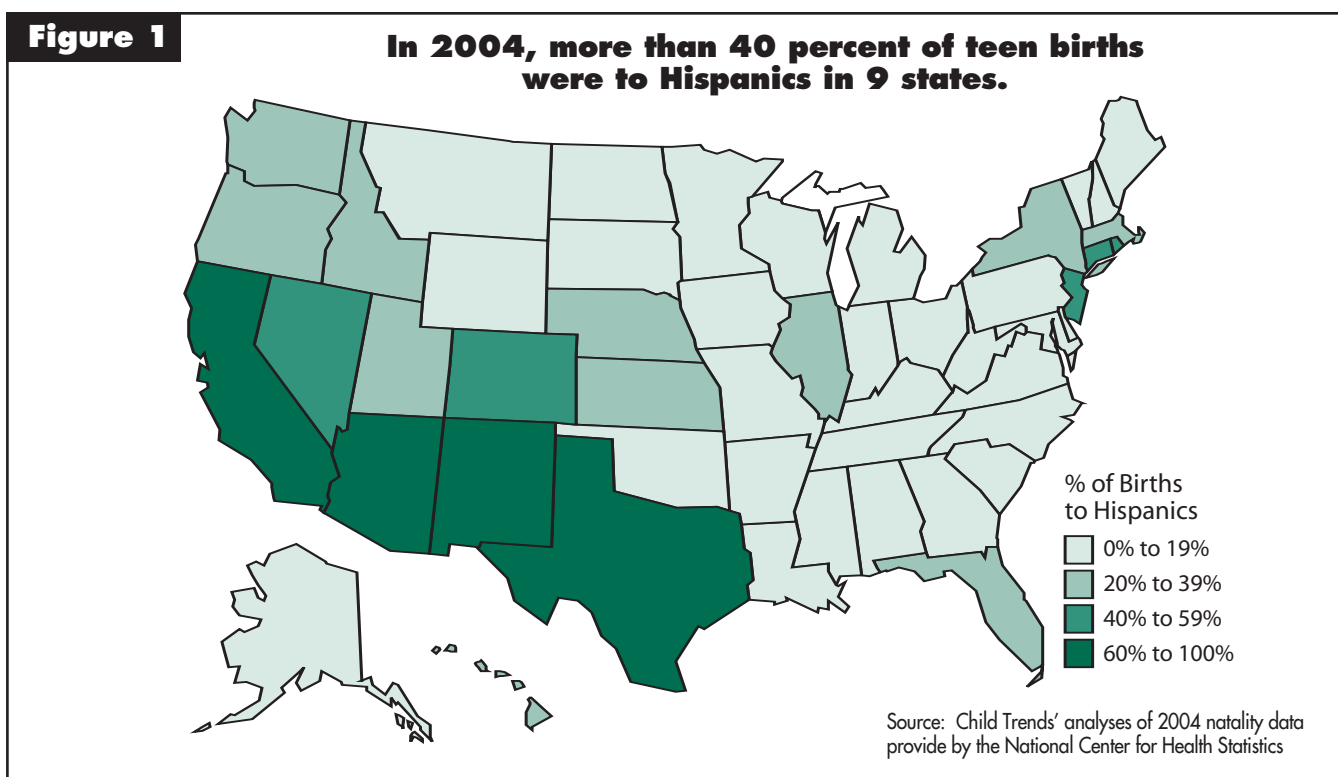
ABOUT THE DATA SOURCES FOR THIS BRIEF

All birth data in this brief originated from the Natality Data Set CD Series 21, gathered and disseminated by the National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS). Original Child Trends analyses produced all state-level birth statistics for women between the ages of 15 and 19. Population information for 1990 came from the Decennial Census 1990, with 2004 data based on population estimates by the U.S. Census Bureau.^{13,14,16} Original Child Trends calculations of these data were used to determine the proportions and changes over time in the female population and births to Hispanics. These calculations compared female Hispanic teens with the total female teen population, which also includes Hispanics. States with fewer than 50 births to Hispanic teens in 2004 did not have sufficient data to assess the changes in the proportion of Hispanic teen births in a meaningful way. The percentage change between 1990 and 2004 in the proportion of teen births to Hispanics was calculated by determining the percentage point difference between the two time points, and dividing that by the percentage of teen births to Hispanics in 1990. Child Trends drew supplemental information on 1990, 2002, and 2004 birth rates from recent reports from NCHS.^{6,8,11}

BIRTHS TO HISPANIC TEENS IN 2004

Nearly one-third of births to teens in the United States in 2004 were to Hispanics. Whereas Hispanic females comprised 16 percent of the U.S. teen female population, 32 percent of births to teens in 2004 were to Hispanics (see rankings in Table 1 and Table 3).

The states with the highest proportion of Hispanic teens are also the states with the highest proportion of teen births to Hispanics. In 2004, Hispanic teen births made up 60 percent or more of all teen births in four states: Arizona, California, New Mexico, and Texas. In these same states, Hispanics accounted for 34 to 49 percent of the teen population (see Figure 1 and Table 3). The proportion of teen births to Hispanics was greater than 40 percent in five additional states: Colorado, Connecticut, Nevada, New Jersey, and Rhode Island, where Hispanics comprised between 12 and 27 percent of the teen population. In 11 states, geographically dispersed throughout the country, the proportion of teen births to Hispanics was between 20 percent and 40 percent. These states included: Idaho, Oregon, Utah, and Washington in the Northwest/West; Illinois, Kansas, and Nebraska in the Midwest; Massachusetts, and New York in the



Northeast; Florida in the Southeast; and Hawaii. In 31 states and the District of Columbia, less than one-fifth of teen births were to Hispanics.

The states with the highest proportion of teen births to Hispanics are not the states with the highest Hispanic teen birth rates. In 2002, (the most recent year for which state-level data on Hispanic teen birth rates are available), the U.S. Hispanic teen birth rate was 83 births per 1,000 females between the ages of 15 and 19. The five states with the highest teen birth rates for Hispanics—North Carolina (164), Georgia (153), Tennessee (153), Alabama (145), and Delaware (143)—were all states in which less than 20 percent of teen births were to Hispanics (see Table 1). This paradoxical pattern may reflect variations in Hispanic teen birth rates by country of origin of the mother, as well as by generation and other family and individual factors; and these factors are not homogenous across the Hispanic teen population.¹²

TRENDS IN BIRTHS TO HISPANIC TEENS, 1990-2004

The proportion of teen births to Hispanics is growing faster than is the Hispanic teen population in nearly all states. In 1990, 19 percent of births to females between the ages of 15 and 19 in the United States were to Hispanics (see Table 3). In separate analyses, we found that in all but one state (Idaho), the rate of increase in births to Hispanic teens outpaced the rate of increase in the Hispanic teen population. Every state and the District of Columbia showed an increase of at least two percentage points in the proportion of births that occurred to Hispanics between 1990 and 2004, with an average increase of 13 percentage points nationally. This pattern reflects greater declines in teen childbearing among other subgroups, compared with Hispanics.

Even states with small percentages of teen births to Hispanics have experienced large increases in the proportion of teen births to Hispanics. Between 1990 and 2004, the proportion of teen births to Hispanics at least doubled in 33 states and the District of Columbia (see Figure 2, rankings in Table 2 and Table 3). With the exception of New Hampshire and South Dakota, the largest increases (between four- and 22-fold) were in states located in the Southeast and Midwest. The five states with the greatest increases in the proportion of teen births to Hispanics—Alabama, Arkansas, Kentucky, South Carolina, and Tennessee—all had 1 percent or less than 1 percent of teen births to Hispanics in 1990, but had between 5 percent and 9 percent of these births in 2004. While these increases are

Table 1

2004 State-Level Rankings of the Proportion of Teen Births to Hispanics

Ranking	State of residence	Of all births to 15-19 year-olds, % to Hispanics, 2004.
1	California	72%
2	New Mexico	67%
3	Arizona	62%
4	Texas	61%
5	Colorado	55%
6	Nevada	50%
7	New Jersey	45%
8	Connecticut	44%
9	Rhode Island	40%
10	New York	38%
11	Massachusetts	33%
12	Illinois	31%
13	Washington	31%
14	Oregon	30%
15	Utah	30%
16	Florida	28%
17	Idaho	25%
18	Hawaii	23%
19	Kansas	22%
20	Nebraska	21%
21	Delaware	18%
22	North Carolina	17%
23	Pennsylvania	17%
24	Wyoming	17%
25	Georgia	16%
26	Minnesota	16%
27	Oklahoma	15%
28	Wisconsin	15%
29	Iowa	13%
30	Maryland	13%
31	Virginia	13%
32	Alaska	12%
33	District of Columbia	12%
34	Indiana	10%
35	Arkansas	9%
36	Michigan	9%
37	South Carolina	9%
38	Tennessee	8%
39	Alabama	7%
40	Missouri	6%
41	Montana	6%
42	New Hampshire	6%
43	Ohio	6%
44	South Dakota	6%
45	Kentucky	5%
46	North Dakota	4%
47	Louisiana	3%
48	Mississippi	3%
49	Maine	2%
50	Vermont	2%
51	West Virginia	1%

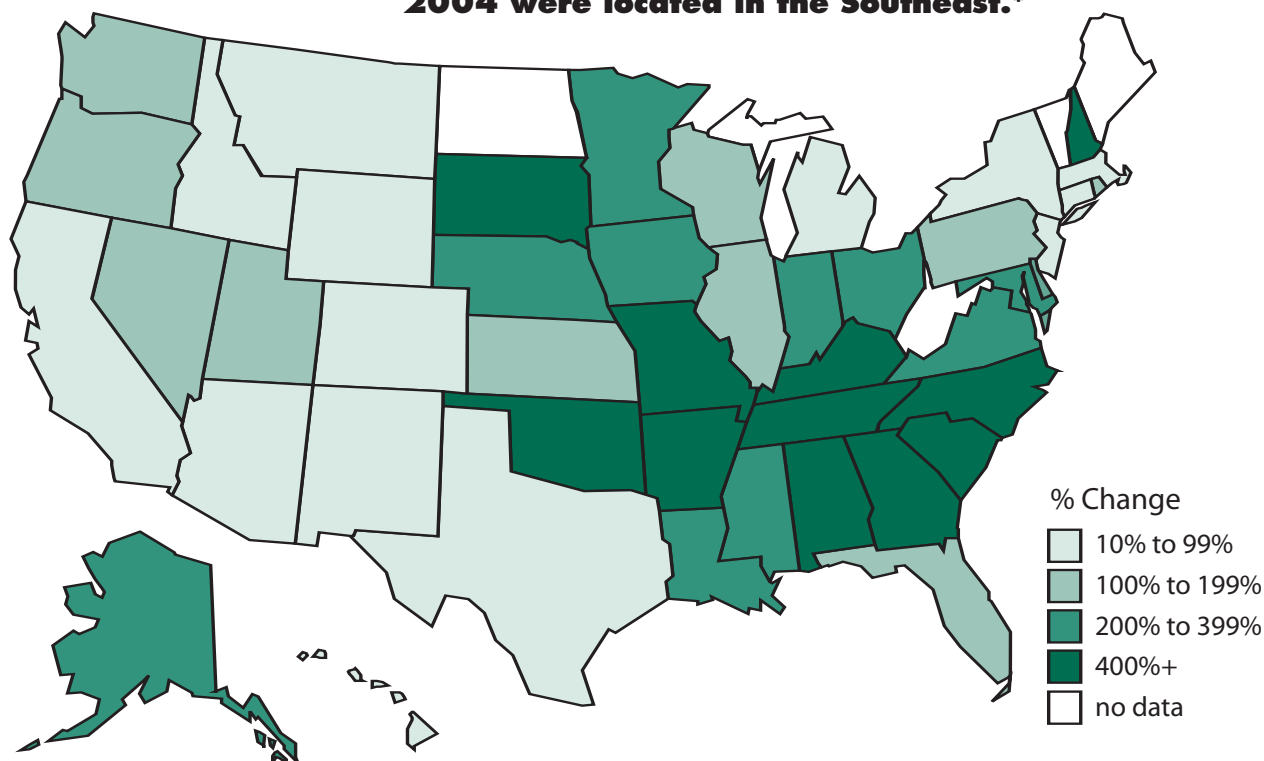
U.S. Total

32%

Source: Birth data are from the National Center for Health Statistics: 2004 Natality Detail File CD Series 21, No. 17H(a).

Figure 2

The states with the largest percentage increases in the proportion of teen births to Hispanics between 1990 and 2004 were located in the Southeast.*



Source: Child Trends' analyses of 1990 and 2004 natality data provided by the National Center for Health Statistics
 * Percent change in states with fewer than 50 Hispanic teen births in 2004 cannot be meaningfully estimated

striking, many still reflect a relatively small number of births. For example, Alabama experienced one of the *largest* percentage increases in the proportion of teen births to Hispanics even though there were only 501 more Hispanic teen births in 2004 than in 1990 (537 vs. 36). In contrast, Texas experienced one of the smallest percentage increases even though there were 9,801 more Hispanic teen births in 2004 than in 1990 (31,325 vs. 21,524).

DISCUSSION

The decline in the teen birth rate for all teens, including Hispanics, is good news. However, the high Hispanic teen birth rate and its relatively slow decline—compared with other subpopulations of teens—are important indicators that Hispanic teens have an especially high need for culturally appropriate support and resources to help them make informed decisions about their reproductive health. This *Research Brief* has highlighted data showing that both the percentage of Hispanic teens and the percentage of Hispanic teen births are growing across all states, with the growth of Hispanic teen births outpacing the growth in the population of Hispanic teens in all but one state. Therefore, addressing the needs of the Hispanic teen population is no longer an issue for only the states with large Hispanic populations.

This brief has identified two groups of states with either 1) an especially high *percentage* of teen births to Hispanics or, 2) with a relatively low percentage of teen births to Hispanics but especially high *growth* in teen births that occur to Hispanics. These two groups of states face unique issues in addressing Hispanic teen pregnancy and childbearing.

- **States with a high percentage of teen births to Hispanics.** In almost one in five states, 40 percent or more of teen births occurred to Hispanic teens. In four states, more than 60 percent of teen births occurred to Hispanics: Arizona, California, New Mexico, and Texas. Many of these states have set up initiatives to help reduce teen pregnancies and births to Hispanics.
- **States with a low percentage of teen births to Hispanics but especially large increases in the proportion of teen births to Hispanics.** Hispanic teen births are increasing dramatically across several states with a relatively low percentage of Hispanic teen births. For example, the proportion of teen births to Hispanics more than quadrupled in 11 states (see Table 2 and Figure 2). Nevertheless, in these states, less than 5 percent to 17 percent of the state's teen births in 2004 occurred to

Hispanics. States experiencing recent, large increases in the proportion of Hispanic teens and Hispanic teen parents can learn from initiatives in other states that have a history of working with these subpopulations when developing programs and interventions. These prevention efforts may include a special focus on providing culturally appropriate care and eliminating many barriers to health care access. For example, California's Family PACT (Planning, Access, Care, and Treatment) Program uses this approach as it strives to serve a population that is 60 percent Hispanic.¹

This brief has presented information that addresses the *what* of state-level variations in the proportion of teen births to Hispanics, but what about the *why*? Below, we highlight some possible explanations for the trends that have emerged from our statistical analyses.

Changes in the proportion of teen births to Hispanics reflect patterns of teen births in other subpopulations of teens. The teen birth rate declined by at least 40 percent between the early 1990s and 2004 for both non-Hispanic white and non-Hispanic black teens, but the Hispanic teen birth rate declined by only 22 percent during the same time period.⁶ Therefore, one key reason that the proportion of Hispanic teen births has increased is that births to black and white teens have declined at a more rapid pace in recent years.

High growth in Hispanic teen births may reflect generation status. Separate analyses of data from the Current Population Survey indicate that states with high growth in, but relatively low proportions of, births to Hispanic teens have a much higher percentage of first-generation families than do states with higher proportions of, but relatively low increases in, births to Hispanics. Because teen birth rates are higher among first-generation Hispanics, the high proportion of first-generation families may contribute to greater growth in teen births in these states. Also, these first-generation families represent new arrivals to the state.

Generation status and country of origin may influence pregnancy prevention efforts. The population of Hispanic teens varies greatly by state, as noted. Reflecting this variation, pregnancy prevention efforts should be tailored to the distinct needs of specific communities. For example, birth rates are much higher among first-generation Hispanics than among native-born Hispanics.⁵ In addition, birth rates differ dramatically by the country of origin of the mother. For instance, among groups for which teen birth rates could be calculated,¹ teens of Mexican

Table 2

State-Level Rankings of Growth in the Proportion of Teen Births to Hispanics Between 1990 and 2004

Ranking	State of residence	% change in proportion of teen births to Hispanics 1990-2004 ^{a,b}
1	Alabama	400% +
2	Tennessee	400% +
3	Kentucky	400% +
4	Arkansas	400% +
5	South Carolina	400% +
6	North Carolina	400% +
7	Georgia	400% +
8	Missouri	400% +
9	New Hampshire	400% +
10	South Dakota	400% +
11	Oklahoma	400% +
12	Iowa	333%
13	Maryland	333%
14	Virginia	333%
15	Alaska	300%
16	Minnesota	300%
17	Delaware	260%
18	Nebraska	250%
19	Indiana	233%
20	Louisiana	200%
21	Mississippi	200%
22	Ohio	200%
23	Kansas	175%
24	Oregon	173%
25	Nevada	150%
26	Wisconsin	150%
27	Washington	138%
28	Florida	133%
29	Utah	131%
30	Rhode Island	122%
31	Pennsylvania	113%
32	Illinois	107%
33	District of Columbia	100%
34	New Jersey	88%
35	Michigan	80%
36	Idaho	67%
37	Colorado	62%
38	Connecticut	52%
39	Arizona	51%
40	Montana	50%
41	Massachusetts	43%
42	New York	36%
43	Texas	36%
44	California	33%
45	Wyoming	31%
46	New Mexico	20%
47	Hawaii	10%
--	Maine	--
--	North Dakota	--
--	Vermont	--
--	West Virginia	--
U.S. Total		68%

Source: Birth data are from the National Center for Health Statistics: 1990 Natality Data Set CD Series 21, No. 8; 2004 Natality Detail File CD Series 21, No. 17H(a). ^a—Percentages of growth in states with fewer than 50 births to Hispanics in 2004 cannot be meaningfully estimated. ^b Percentage change=(2004 proportion-1990 proportion)/1990 proportion.

Table 3

1990 and 2004 State-Level Comparison of Proportion of Births to and Proportion of Population that is Hispanic, 2004 Total Birth Rate, and 2002 Hispanic Birth Rate, Among 15-19 Year-Old Females

State of residence	% of 15-19 year-old population that is Hispanic, 1990	% of 15-19 year-old population that is Hispanic, 2004	Number of teen births to Hispanics, 1990	Number of teen births to Hispanics, 2004	Of all births to 15-19 year-olds, % to Hispanics, 1990	Of all births to 15-19 year-olds, % to Hispanics, 2004	Total teen birth rate, 2004	Hispanic teen birth rate, 2002
Alabama	1%	2%	36	537	0.3%	7%	52	145
Alaska	4%	5%	38	110	3%	12%	39	99
Arizona	25%	34%	3,944	7,125	41%	62%	60	109
Arkansas	1%	5%	82	519	1%	9%	60	116
California	34%	41%	37,891	35,314	54%	72%	40	71
Colorado	17%	22%	2,049	3,742	34%	55%	44	119
Connecticut	9%	13%	1,168	1,247	29%	44%	24	84
Delaware	3%	6%	64	205	5%	18%	44	143
District of Columbia	6%	7%	111	105	6%	12%	67	110
Florida	14%	20%	3,318	6,430	12%	28%	42	56
Georgia	2%	6%	298	2,579	2%	16%	53	153
Hawaii	10%	11%	449	333	21%	23%	36	85
Idaho	6%	11%	291	514	15%	25%	39	88
Illinois	10%	15%	3,829	5,491	15%	31%	40	85
Indiana	2%	4%	319	978	3%	10%	44	98
Iowa	2%	4%	126	409	3%	13%	32	111
Kansas	5%	9%	358	854	8%	22%	41	100
Kentucky	1%	2%	40	303	0.4%	5%	49	92
Louisiana	2%	3%	79	242	1%	3%	56	35
Maine	1%	1%	14	19	0.8%	2%	24	--
Maryland	3%	5%	216	793	3%	13%	32	74
Massachusetts	7%	10%	1,666	1,503	23%	33%	22	81
Michigan	3%	4%	925	1,103	5%	9%	34	72
Minnesota	2%	4%	203	765	4%	16%	27	118
Mississippi	1%	2%	14	169	1%	3%	62	80
Missouri	2%	3%	128	519	1%	6%	43	100
Montana	2%	3%	48	66	4%	6%	36	--
Nebraska	3%	7%	141	469	6%	21%	36	135
Nevada	13%	27%	524	1,860	20%	50%	51	98
New Hampshire	1%	2%	1	51	1%	6%	18	--
New Jersey	14%	16%	2,441	3,147	24%	45%	24	67
New Mexico	45%	49%	2,436	2,953	56%	67%	61	84
New York	15%	17%	7,366	6,550	28%	38%	27	58
North Carolina	1%	5%	283	2,316	2%	17%	49	164
North Dakota	1%	2%	20	23	3%	4%	27	--
Ohio	2%	3%	486	836	2%	6%	39	79
Oklahoma	3%	7%	8	1,021	3%	15%	56	110
Oregon	5%	11%	547	1,204	11%	30%	33	98
Pennsylvania	3%	5%	1,375	2,131	8%	17%	31	95
Rhode Island	6%	12%	280	415	18%	40%	33	107
South Carolina	1%	3%	87	646	1%	9%	52	133
South Dakota	1%	2%	17	71	1%	6%	39	--
Tennessee	1%	3%	56	854	0.4%	8%	52	153
Texas	32%	38%	21,524	31,325	45%	61%	63	100
Utah	5%	10%	462	962	13%	30%	34	109
Vermont	1%	2%	3	9	0.4%	2%	21	--
Virginia	3%	6%	331	1,151	3%	13%	35	76
Washington	6%	10%	1,079	2,036	13%	31%	31	90
West Virginia	1%	1%	5	14	0.1%	1%	44	--
Wisconsin	3%	5%	400	888	6%	15%	30	107
Wyoming	7%	8%	118	138	13%	17%	43	68
U.S. Total	11%	16%	97,694	133,044	19%	32%	41	83

Source: Birth data are from the National Center for Health Statistics: 1990 Natality Data Set CD Series 21, No. 8; 2004 Natality Detail File CD Series 21, No. 17H(a). 1990 population data are from the 1990 Census, 2004 data is based on population estimates by the U.S. Census Bureau. 2004 total birth rates are from Martin, J. A., Hamilton, B. E., Sutton, P. D., Ventura, S. J., Menacker, F., & Kirmeyer, S. (2006). Births: Final data for 2004. National Vital Statistics Reports. Vol. 55, No. 1. 2002 Hispanic birth rates are from Sutton, P. D., & Mathews, T. J. (2004). Trends in characteristics of births by state: United States, 1990, 1995, and 2000-2002. National Vital Statistics Reports. Vol. 52, No. 19. The figure does not meet standards of reliability or precision.

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origin had the highest birth rates and experienced the smallest declines in teen birth rates among Hispanic teens, whereas teens of Puerto Rican origin experienced the largest declines in birth rates among Hispanic teens.^{8,12}

Only a few pregnancy prevention programs target Hispanic teens. Currently, only a small number of programs designed to improve positive reproductive health choices among Hispanic teens (and in some cases designed specifically for Hispanic teens) have been rigorously evaluated using an experimental design and find positive results. These programs include Draw the Line/Respect the Line, Safer Choices, Children's Aid Society-Carrera Program, iCuidate!/Take Care of Yourself: The Hispanic Youth Health Promotion Program, and Reach for Health Community Youth Service (RFHCYS).^{2,10} Practitioners who work with Hispanic teens stress the importance of having staff members who are familiar with the culture and language of the youth with whom they work, who have had similar life experiences, and who are dedicated to and can serve as role models for their clients. These practitioners also point to a discord between the emphasis of many traditional U.S. teen pregnancy prevention programs on delaying parenthood until one is economically independent and the emphasis on family and motherhood found within many Hispanic traditions.⁹ Others in the field identify the need to engage the parents, families, and communities of Hispanic teens in programs and to help teens set goals for the future.¹⁸ This need reflects research that has shown an association between parent-teen communication in Hispanic families and reduced sexual activity, increased condom use, and reduced pregnancy rates among teens.⁴

This *Research Brief* has focused on the increasing proportion of births to Hispanic teens in a number of states. Expanding our state-level knowledge and our understanding of effective interventions can help state-level agencies and local program providers meet the needs of the communities that they serve.

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ENDNOTES

ⁱ The population of Cuban teens is too small to reliably and precisely calculate state-level birth rates in the years between Censuses. In states for which Cuban teen birth rates were calculated for 2000, Cuban teens in California, Florida, New Jersey, and New York had some of the lowest birth rates among Hispanic teens.¹²

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