

# Effects of Family Structure on Teen Pregnancies

Family intactness has the greatest attenuating influence of all explanatory variables investigated on teenage [out-of-wedlock births](#), including in the case where income is controlled for.<sup>1)</sup> Earned income itself has no precisely determinable influence on teenage out-of-wedlock births.<sup>2)</sup>

Teenage out-of-wedlock birthrates are more sensitive to [family intactness](#) across the geographic areas studied than they are to high school graduation levels. This is additional empirical evidence that family is more important than formal high school education, including sexual education, in influencing levels of teenage out-of-wedlock birth.

Increasing the fraction of the population that is black enhances teenage out-of-wedlock births in an area. This presumably illuminates a social phenomenon in this sub-population. Increasing the fraction of the population that is Hispanic has no determinable influence on teenage out-of-wedlock births in an area.

The large enhancing influence of an area's minor dependency ratio on teenage out-of-wedlock births can be partially interpreted as an effect of a low level of adult care.<sup>3)</sup> However, a higher ratio of minors to adults means, proportionately, a higher ratio of teenager births to adult births, all or other things held constant. Furthermore, in controlling for minor dependency, the model induces reverse causality: more [teenage out-of-wedlock births](#) increases minor dependency. Because of this, the level of influence of minor dependency on teenage out-of-wedlock births is overstated.<sup>4)</sup>

<sup>1)</sup> See U.S. Social Policy Dependence on the Family for the full report, including all methodological considerations.

<sup>2)</sup> Technically, the model given concerns adult high school graduation levels. However, our conclusion continues to hold when we test multiple models including high school graduation rates—among teenagers—themselves.

<sup>3)</sup> When we look at the interaction between Belonging and minor dependency on teenage out-of-wedlock births, we see it is more minors in areas with low Belonging that show relatively higher teenage out-of-wedlock birth rates. More minors in areas with high levels of Belonging show lower teenage out-of-wedlock birth rates.

<sup>4)</sup> The control is still active in removing bias from the other explanatory variables' influences. It likely over-corrects in this role.

This entry draws heavily from [U.S. Social Policy Dependence on the Family](#).

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