



healthy
futures
OF TEXAS

Advancing informed
sexual health decisions

Adolescent Health in the Rio Grande Valley

A baby is born to a
teen mom in the RGV
once every

» **5 hours**

TEXAS TEEN BIRTHS, 2023

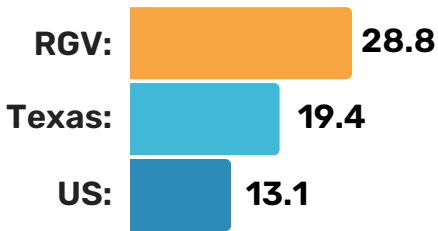
With support, families led by teen parents can thrive. However, early and unintended childbearing can make it harder for young people to achieve personal, educational and professional goals and attain financial stability.

Between 2007, the teen birth rate in both Texas and the US has declined by two-thirds, an astounding public health shift. However, **Texas still has the 8th highest rate of teen birth in the nation**, and the 3rd highest rate of repeat teen birth.

The Rio Grande Valley Counties – Cameron, Hidalgo, Starr, and Willacy – all have teen birth rates **significantly higher** than the state average. In 2023, the Texas teen birth rate was 19.4 per 1,000 girls age 15-19. In other words, 1.94% of Texas teens gave birth, a rate 49% higher than the national average. In the Rio Grande Valley, the teen birth rate was 28.8 per 1,000, or **49% higher than the state average and more than twice as high as the national rate**.

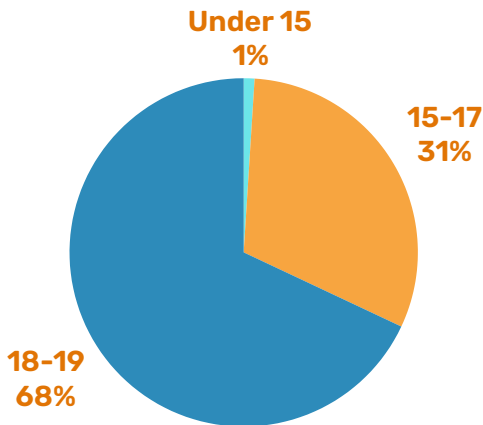
In 2023 there were 1,173 teen births in the RGV, representing **8% of all Texas teen births**.

Teen Birth Rate per 1,000



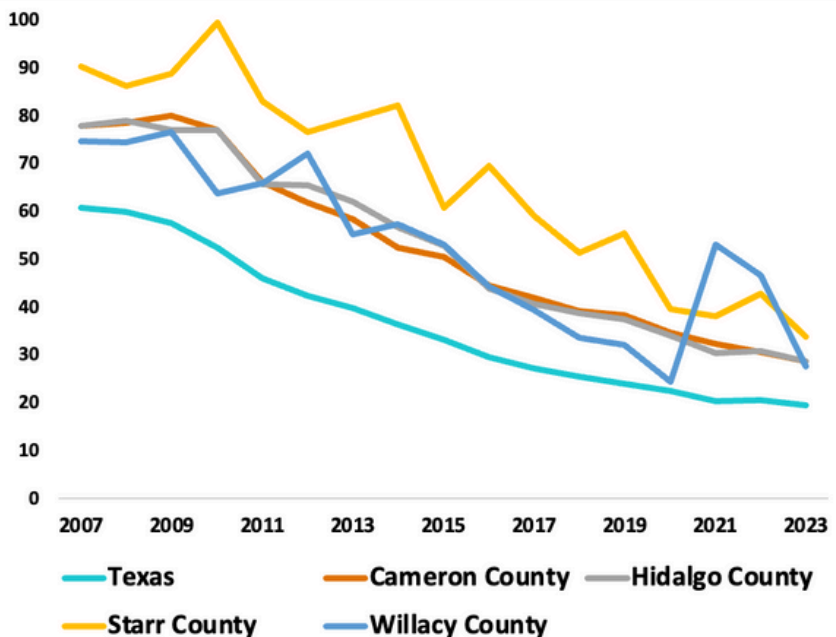
The teen birth rate in the Rio Grande Valley is 49% higher than the Texas rate and more double (120% higher) than the US rate.

Teen Births in the RGV by Age of Mother



1,173 births to teens aged
15-19 in the RGV in
2023

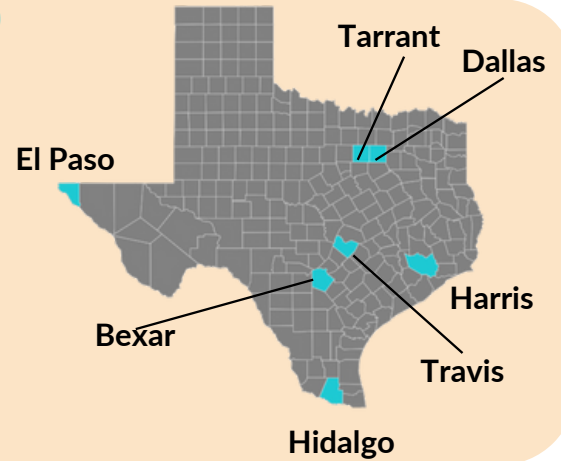
Teen Birth Rate per 1,000 Teens Aged 15-19, 2007 - 2023



COUNTY RATES

Due to their large populations, **more than half of Texas births** occur in just **7 counties**: Harris, Dallas, Tarrant, Bexar, Hidalgo, El Paso, and Travis. However, the highest rates of teen birth tend to occur in more rural counties, especially counties in west Texas or the border regions.

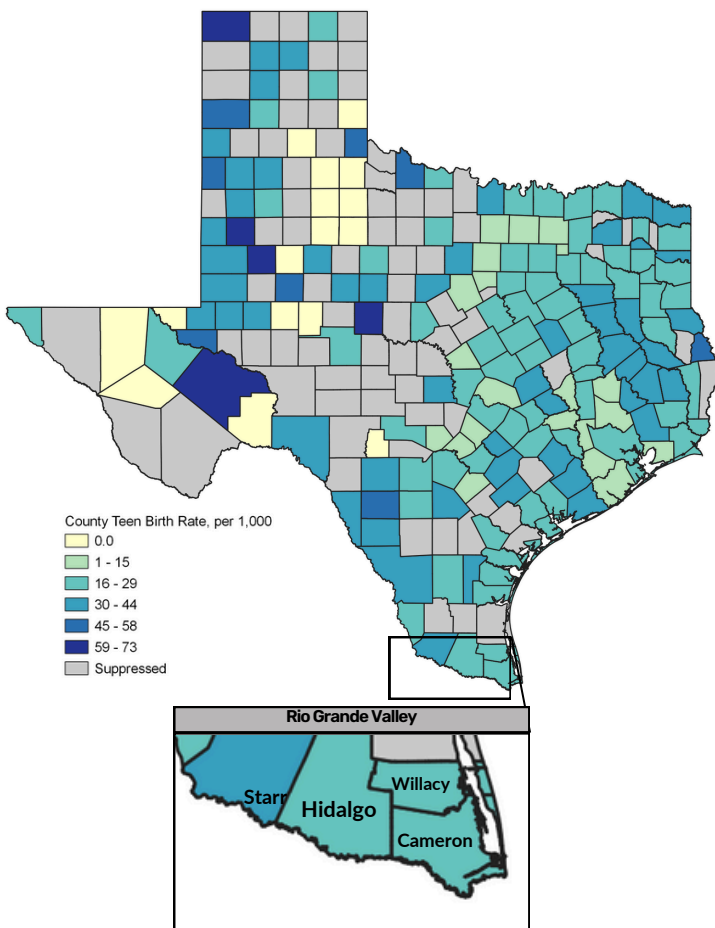
In the RGV, Hidalgo County has the highest overall count of teen births, but the highest rate is found in Starr County. Since 2007, the RGV counties have seen teen births decline by 63%.



Historical Teen Birth Rates in the RGV

Area	2023		2022		% Change	
	Total Teen Births, ages 15 - 19	Teen Birth Rate 2023	Total Teen Births, ages 15 - 19	Teen Birth Rate 2022	Change, 2022 - 2023	Change, 2007 - 2023
Cameron County	493	28.6	527	30.5	-6%	-63%
Hidalgo County	1,105	28.6	1,173	30.7	-7%	-63%
Starr County	95	33.7	119	42.8	-21%	-63%
Willacy County	20	27.5	33	46.5	-41%	-63%
Texas	20,856	19.4	21,309	20.4	-5%	-69%

Note: If there are fewer than 10 teen births in a county, the data is suppressed to protect privacy. However, rates in these counties may still be high.



WHAT IS A TEEN BIRTH RATE?

A teen birth rate is a mathematical formula that shows how many girls between the ages of 15-19 out of a 1,000 had a baby in a given year. Teen birth rates can be calculated at the national, state, county, or even zip code level. Teen birth rates are shown per 1,000 girls aged 15-19. A teen birth rate of 30 per 1,000 means that 3% of teens in a given area had a baby that year.

$$\frac{\text{Count of teen births in Travis County in 2023}}{\text{Estimated number of girls aged 15-19 living in Travis County in 2023}} \times 1,000 = \text{Travis County 2023 teen birth rate of 18.0 per 1,000}$$

$$\frac{707}{39,398} \times 1,000 = 18.0$$

HOW DO WE MEASURE CHANGE?

Change can be reported as percent change. It's calculated as:

$$\frac{\text{Teen Birth Rate, Cameron County, 2023} - \text{Teen Birth Rate, Cameron County, 2022}}{\text{Teen Birth Rate, Cameron County, 2022}} \times 100 = -6\%$$

$$\frac{28.6 - 30.13}{30.13} \times 100 = -6\%$$

DISPARITIES IN TEEN BIRTH RATES

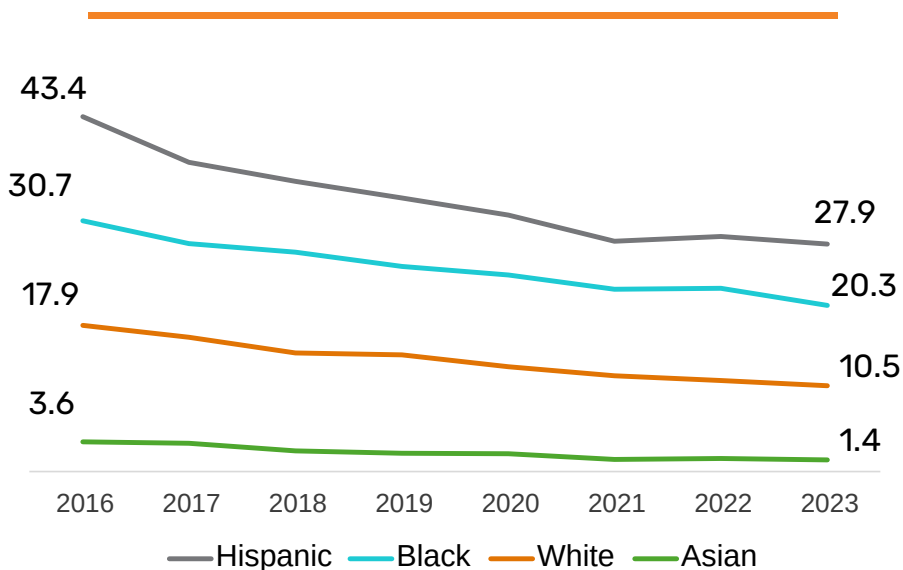
Factors such as access to health care, information, and economic opportunity can lead to disparities in teen birth rates. Though rates for all ethnicities have declined in the last decade, the rate of decline has been slower for black and Hispanic teens.

In 2022, the birth rate for Hispanic teens was 2.6 times higher than white teens. This gap increased to 2.7 times higher in 2023.

In 2023, 68% of teen births were to Hispanic teens, including 13,633 white Hispanic teens and 472 teens who identify as both Hispanic and black, Asian, American Indian or Hawaiian Pacific islander. In Texas, 96% of non-Hispanic teen mothers and 76% of Hispanic teen mothers were born within the US.

99% of teen births in Hidalgo County and 90% of teen births in Cameron County were to Hispanic mothers. Both counties have Hispanic teen birth rates that are similar to the state average.

Teen Birth Rate by Ethnicity, 2023



Teen Births by Ethnicity				
Area	Teen Birth Rate		Teen Birth Count	
	Hispanic	Total	Hispanic	Total
Cameron County	27.8	28.6	441	493
Hidalgo County	30.4	28.6	1,096	1,118
Texas	28.7	19.4	14,105	20,856

SEXUAL HEALTH EDUCATION

75%

of Texas voters support abstinence plus sex education



Sexual health education can help young people stay safe and healthy by providing factual information on topics like healthy relationships, abstinence, birth control, and prevention of sexually transmitted infections. This type of school-based instruction is **widely supported by Texas parents**.

In 2020, the Texas State Board of Education **updated the minimum curriculum standards** for Health Education, including appropriate sexual health information in the middle school level, when all students are required to be offered this instruction. In Texas, parents maintain the right to opt their children out of any instruction on sexual health or abuse prevention without penalty.

Young people in Texas report that they want to receive information on sexual health from trusted sources such as schools, parents and doctors, rather than relying on the internet or peers. However, despite recent improvements to state standards, many Texas students still **do not receive adequate school-based instruction**.

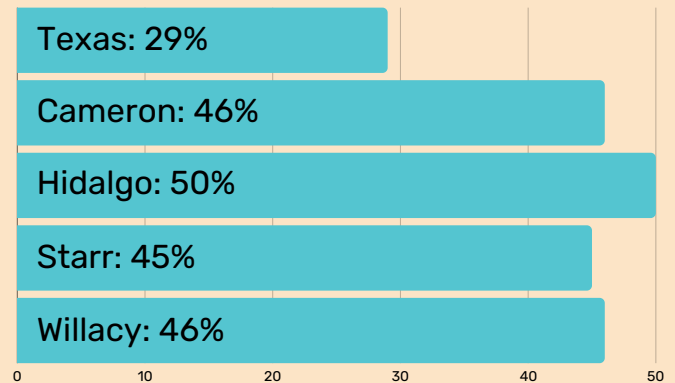
NON-MEDICAL DRIVERS OF HEALTH

Non-Medical Drivers of Health are conditions in the places where people **live, learn, work and play** that affect a wide range of health risks and outcomes. These issues can contribute to adolescent health, including teen pregnancy and rates of sexually transmitted infections.

Young people in Texas are **more likely** than their peers nationwide to live in poverty, not have health insurance, or experience one or more Adverse Childhood Experiences, or ACES.

Children and teens in the Rio Grande Valley are even more likely than their Texas peers to lack health insurance, and more than 1/3 of RGV children grow up in poverty, compared to 19% of children in Texas

➤ Percent of young adults (age 19-26) without health insurance



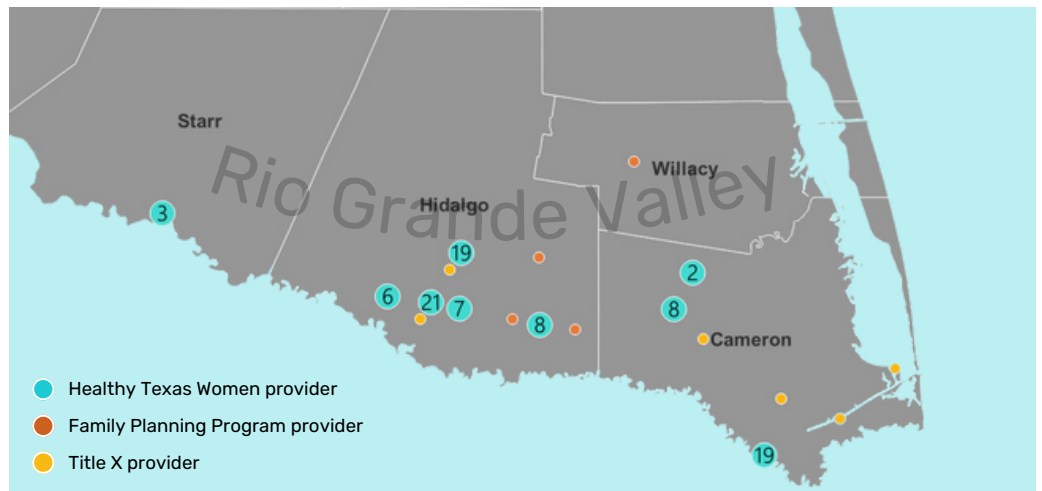
HEALTH CARE ACCESS

Texas is the largest state in the nation to not expand Medicaid. As a result, many young people in Texas are uninsured.

When teens do become pregnant, most are eligible for Pregnant Women’s Medicaid, which covers more than **4 out of 5** teen births in Texas.

Three important programs – **Title X, Healthy Texas Women (HTW) and the Family Planning Program (FPP)** – provide access to care such as birth control, cancer screenings, STI screening and treatment, and other services. In the RGV there are:

- 15 Title X providers
- 88 HTW providers
- 16 FPP providers



Healthy Texas Women

Serves women ages 15-44 who are citizens or long-term legal residents with incomes below 204% of the federal poverty limit.



Family Planning Program

Serves men and women of all immigration statuses up to the age of 64 with incomes below 250% of the federal poverty limit.



Title X

Pronounced “Title Ten,” this federally funded program serves men and women of all ages and immigration statuses on a sliding scale.



To find a provider, scan the QR codes

SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED INFECTIONS, 2023

Teen birth rates have declined recently, but **STIs are increasing** among Texas youth. This may be due to declining condom usage, healthcare access changes, or other factors. Texas minors can consent to screening and treatment for most STIs.

Congenital syphilis, once nearly eradicated, has shown an **alarming increase** in recent years, both in Texas and the US. This condition occurs when a pregnant woman passes a syphilis infection onto her baby, often resulting in death or lifelong disability. Early treatment can often prevent infection. Still, many pregnant women with syphilis do not receive timely or adequate care.

Texas Teen mothers have the **highest incidence** of syphilis during pregnancy of any age group.

Health Education in Texas public schools now includes information on the types of STIs and the importance of prevention, screening, and treatment.

24%

of reported congenital syphilis cases in 2023 occurred in Texas

In Texas in 2023

57% of chlamydia cases,
43% of gonorrhea cases,
19% of syphilis cases, and
21% of HIV cases

occurred in youth under the
age of 25



A word of caution: the reported data only show the cases that have been *diagnosed*. However, in a country where many young people lack access to health care, a “low” rate may simply reflect the fact that **many cases are undiagnosed**. Alternatively, a high rate or increasing rates could indicate improved access to screening and treatment.

Between 2019 and 2023 Texas congenital syphilis cases increased by

70%

To find low-cost HIV and STI testing locations, visit dshs.texas.gov/hivstd/testing

Youth STI Data by County, 2023

Area	Chlamydia		Gonorrhea		Syphilis		HIV	
	Count, 2023, Ages 15-24	Change from 2019	Count, 2023, Ages 15-24	Change from 2019	Count, 2023, Ages 15-24	Change from 2019	Count of New Diagnoses, 2023, Ages 13-24	Change from 2019
Cameron County	1,830	24%	200	120%	111	178%	23	130%
Hidalgo County	2,147	4%	372	85%	155	52%	25	47%
Starr County	112	-3%	13	18%	9	80%	--	--
Willacy County	98	78%	10	100%	9	80%	0	--
Texas	85,974	6%	23,070	8%	5,080	76%	1071	3%

ABOUT US

Healthy Futures of Texas is a statewide nonpartisan, non-profit organization committed to improving the wellbeing of young Texans through equitable access to sexual health education, contraception, and resources.

We address the increasing barriers that young people in Texas face to obtain quality sex education and access to contraception and preventative sexual healthcare, promoting a healthier future for all Texans.

 [Learn more at hftx.org.](https://hftx.org)

OUR PILLARS**ADVOCACY****AWARENESS****HEALTH EDUCATION****RESEARCH****TRAINING AND
TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE****DATA SOURCES**

Page 1: All data are Healthy Futures of Texas analysis of Natality Data from CDC Wonder, accessed at <https://wonder.cdc.gov/natality.html>. Data shown are final 2023 rates.

Page 2: Large County data are from Natality Data from CDC Wonder, accessed at <https://wonder.cdc.gov/natality.html>. Teen birth counts of small counties shown in map were provided via email by Texas DSHS. Teen birth rates were calculated using Vintage 2023 postcensal single-race estimates of the resident population, accessed at <https://www2.census.gov/programs-surveys/popest/datasets/2020-2023/counties/asrh/>

Page 3: Healthy Futures of Texas analysis of Natality Data from CDC Wonder, accessed at <https://wonder.cdc.gov/natality.html>. Sex Education public opinion polling from <https://hftx.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/Updated-Branding-Public-Opinion-Poll-Results.pdf>

Page 4: Non Medical drivers of Health definition from Texas HHS. Percent of children with ACES from <https://sph.uth.edu/research/centers/dell/legislative-initiatives/docs/2022/ACES-Report-102622.pdf>. Percent of children in poverty from US Census Bureau Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates (SAIPE) Program. Percent of children and youth uninsured from American Community Survey, S2701 Selected Characteristics of Health Insurance Coverage in the United States, 5 year estimates.

Page 5: All STI data from NCHHSTP AtlasPlus, <https://www.cdc.gov/nchhstp/about/atlasplus.html>