

Study: Sex ed reduces teen birth rate

By Rebecca Klein, Huffington Post

California's teen birth rate has dropped nearly 60 percent as a result of expanded sex education programs, according to a report released by the California Department of Public Health last week.

The report -- which was based on data collected until 2011 -- revealed that the California teen birth rate reached a 20-year low that year. While in 1991, there were 70.9 births for every 1,000 teens aged 15-19, in 2011 this number decreased to 28 births per 1,000 teens.

Teen birth rates fell across all ethnic groups, according to the report. The Hispanic teen birth rate dropped from 73.6 in 2001 to 42.7 in 2011 -- although Hispanics continue to be the group with the highest teen birth rate. Teen birth rates for African-Americans, Whites and Asian-Americans also decreased significantly.

Several factors contributed to the falling birth rates, the department said in a press release. One factor was the state's school sex education program, which law requires to be comprehensive and medically accurate. The report also credits community-based education programs that provide sexual health information to teens and their parents.

"We do believe that our programs are behind these numbers," Karen Ramstrom, the chief of the program standards branch at the California Department of Public Health's maternal child and adolescent health division, told the *Los Angeles Times*.

"California's innovative strategies and community partnerships aimed at lowering teen pregnancy are helping young women and

men make responsible choices,” Dr. Ron Chapman, director of the CDPH, said in a press release. “We must not be complacent; we must continue to promote teen pregnancy prevention programs and strategies in all communities.”

As Think Progress noted, California’s teen birth rate decreases are part of a national trend. The national teen birth rate dropped nearly 50 percent between 1991 and 2011, NBC’s Today Health reported.

The nation’s southern states continue to have some of the highest teen birth rates, Think Progress pointed out – partially due to a lack of comprehensive sex education programs in many of those states.