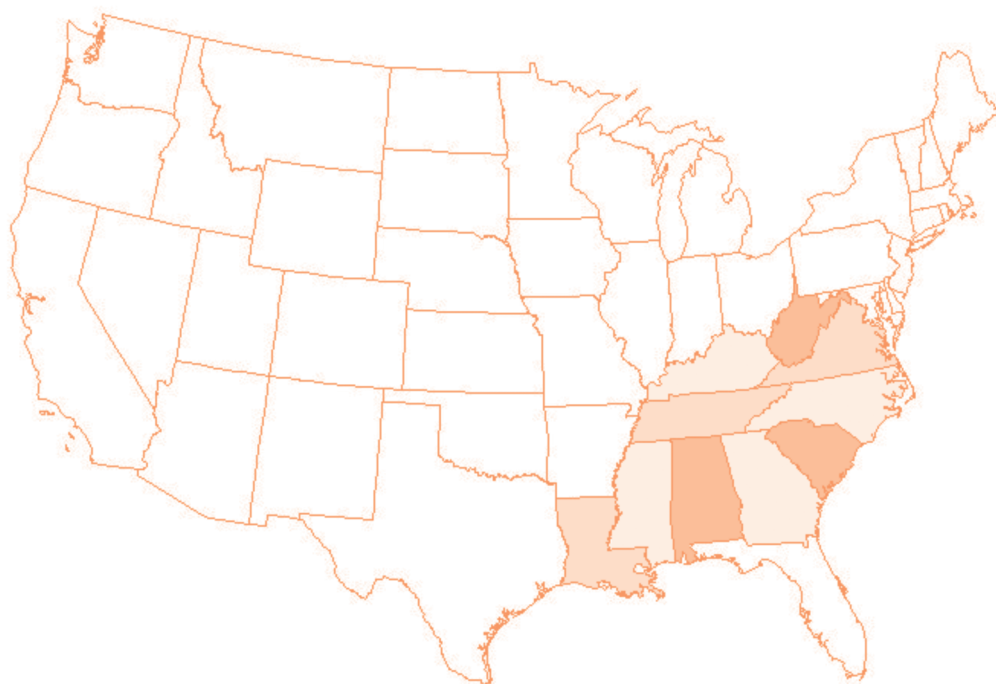


SEXUAL HEALTH OF YOUNG PEOPLE IN THE U.S. SOUTH: *Challenges and Opportunities*

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Sexual Health of Young People in the U.S. South: Challenges and Opportunities

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The United States has the highest rates of teenage pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases among all developed nations.¹ This is even more severe in the southern region of the U.S. which has: higher teenage pregnancy rates; higher teenage births; a higher percentage of babies of low birth weight; and higher rates of sexually transmitted infections, including HIV, than other regions of the country.

This report, *Sexual Health of Young People in the U.S. South: Challenges and Opportunities*, examines the current challenges and opportunities related to the sexual health of young people in 10 Southern states: Alabama, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia, and West Virginia. The report will use the terms Southern states and U.S. South to refer to only these 10 states; the analysis does not include several other states that are sometimes included in definitions of the southern region such as Florida, Texas, Arkansas, and Oklahoma. It includes a profile of key sociodemographic factors in the South relevant to sexual health, including: population growth, race, poverty, and women's educational attainment. The report then looks at the sexual health profile of young people including indicators such as: sexually transmitted infections, HIV, teenage pregnancy, teenage birth, and low birth weight. Finally, the report explores sexual health education practices in the Southern states and the challenges and opportunities they offer to improve the sexual health of young people in the U.S. South.

The U.S. South is characterized by high population growth and high poverty

During the last ten years, the population of the 10 Southern states in this report grew by 11.9 percent: from 50,626,423 in 2000 to 56,668,395 in 2010.^{2,3} In fact, the U.S. South is the second fastest growing region in the nation, just behind the Western region. During the same time period, the national growth rate was 9.7 percent.⁴ These 10 Southern states were home to 18 percent of the U.S. population in 2010.

1 Stanger-Hall, K.F. and Hall, D.W. (2011). Abstinence-Only Education and Teen Pregnancy Rates: Why We Need Comprehensive Sex Education in the U.S. *PLoS ONE* 6 (10), e24658. <http://www.plosone.org/article/info%3Adoi%2F10.1371%2Fjournal.pone.0024658>, accessed December 17, 2011.

2 U.S. Census Bureau's American Fact Finder website, DP-1: Profile of General Demographic Characteristics: 2000. <http://factfinder2.census.gov/>, accessed December 18, 2011.

3 Census Bureau's Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates website. <http://www.census.gov/cgi-bin/saipe/national.cgi?year=2009&ascii>, accessed December 17, 2011.

4 According to the Census Bureau, the U.S population grew by 9.7 percent between 2000 and 2010. <http://2010.census.gov/2010census/data/apportionment-pop-text.php>, accessed December 20, 2011.