

HEALTH

Teen mothers prefer older partners

WASHINGTON (AP) — Just 7 percent of sexually active teen-age girls are sleeping with much older men — but those relationships account for nearly one in five teen pregnancies, a new study finds. By looking at all teen sex, not just liaisons that lead to childbirth, the new data refines earlier research that found most teen mothers had older partners.

In fact, two-thirds of these girls are having sex with boys close to their age, according to the study published today in *Family Planning Perspectives*, the research journal of the Alan Guttmacher Institute.

Still, teen girls who are

having sex with older men — particularly those six or more years older — were less likely to use contraception and less likely to have abortions than their peers involved with younger men.

As a result, they make up a disproportionate share of the teen mothers, facing an increased risk of poverty, welfare and dropping out of school.

"You're dealing with a relatively small number of young women," said Jeannie Rosoff, president of Guttmacher. Still, she added: "If I had my 15-year-old going out with an older guy, I would probably be pretty panicked."

Nearly four in 10 girls ages 15 to 17 have had sex at least once, government surveys find, but this is the first look at the age of their partners.

Women of all ages tend to have older sexual partners — more so for older women than for teen-agers, as age differences become less significant with age.

This study, which used data from a 1995 government survey of families, found that 64 percent of sexually active girls ages 15 to 17 had partners who were within two years of their age. Another 29 percent had sex with partners three to five years

older.

Two-thirds of girls with men six and more years older than they are used contraception, compared with three-quarters of girls with boys close to their own age. And girls with younger boys who got pregnant were nearly twice as likely to abort than girls with older men.

The question is why teen-age girls who are with older men seem more willing to get pregnant — and to carry those pregnancies to term.

Many suggest that men are taking advantage of their younger, more vulnerable partners. That theory, backed

by data released in 1995, sparked a controversial call to crack down on statutory rape and predatory men who lure teen-age girls into sex.

"Power differences, particularly between younger girls and older guys, lead girls into risky situations, like unwanted sex or involuntary sex or sex with no protection," said Bill Albert of the National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy.

Patterns of contraception may offer a less nefarious explanation. Earlier studies have found that as men get older, they are less likely to use condoms. That is usually

offset by their female partners, who start using birth-control pills and other methods of contraception as they get older.

So a man in his early 20s may not want to use a condom, even though his teen-age partner has not yet begun using an alternate method of birth control, said Laura Duberstein Lindberg, who studies these issues at the Urban Institute but was not involved with this research.

"You're getting a gap in life experiences," she said. "She has to struggle all that" (See *Partners*, Page 17)

Religion linked to good health

RALEIGH (AP) — Seniors who attend church or synagogue regularly might possess the secret of longevity.

In another report linking good health with religion, Duke University researchers say seniors with regular church or synagogue attendance are not only healthier but also more likely to live longer than the non-religious.

The researchers, studying nearly 4,000 North Carolinians over 64 years old, found that the death rate of the faithful was 28 percent less than those who didn't attend services regularly.

Studies in recent years focusing on the spiritual dimension of health have yet to show that religious attendance or spirituality cause physical wholeness. But a mounting body of evidence associates the religious with better mental health, lower blood pressure and other health improvements.

The next step, says the study's lead author, Dr. Harold Koenig, is to identify the behavioral and biological mechanisms linking religion to disease prevention and good health.

"These studies do not show that if they are going to church for health reasons, their health will improve," Koenig said. "But if people go to church for religious reasons, they have better health and survive longer."

The findings released in

the July-August medical sciences edition of the *Journal of Gerontology* examined 3,968 adults in five North Carolina counties from 1986-92.

Researchers interviewed participants each year about church attendance, their health, social support and alcohol and tobacco use. The subjects, mostly Christians and Jews, were categorized according to whether they attended religious meetings once weekly.

By 1992, 1,177 participants had died.

Analyses showed 46 percent fewer of the church attendees died during the period than nonchurchgoers. But the rate dropped to 28 percent when the differing ages, health and social factors and smoking and alcohol use within the sample were taken into account.

The respective mortality risks are comparable to those experienced by smokers versus nonsmokers, Koenig said. The risk decline was 35 percent in women and 17 percent in men, according to the study.

The report, funded by the National Institutes of Mental Health, is not the first to tie religious practice to a lower risk of dying. A California study of 5,300 people over 28 years generated similar findings, but the survey sample ranged from 21 to 65 years of age. And the sample's mortality was 15 percent, compared with about

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NOTICE

Solicitation for Nominations from Community Based Organizations for the Southern Nevada Workforce Development Board

The Southern Nevada Job Training Board is soliciting nominations for members to sit on the Workforce Investment Board as mandated by the Workforce Investment Act signed into law August 8, 1998. This board will set policy in the Southern Nevada Workforce area, consisting of the counties of Clark, Nye, Esmeralda, and Lincoln and the cities of Las Vegas, North Las Vegas, Henderson and Boulder City. The majority of the board will be composed of representatives from local business with the balance derived from educational entities, labor organizations, community based organizations, economic development agencies, and a group of social service agencies including welfare, employment security, veterans administration, and vocational rehabilitation.

In order to insure the board functions with power and authority sufficient to fulfill the intent of the act, persons nominated "shall be individuals with optimum policy making authority within the organizations, agencies, or entities" they represent.

The Southern Nevada Workforce Investment Board has eight primary functions:

- 1) The responsibility for the development of a local strategic workforce investment plan.
- 2) The selection and certification of one-stop centers; the identification of eligible providers of youth activities, based on recommendations of the Youth Council; the identification of eligible providers of training services for adult and dislocated workers; the identification of eligible

providers of intensive workforce development intensive services.

3) The development and administration of budgets for the purposes of carrying out the duties of the local Board.

4) The conducting of oversight activities with respect to local programs of youth activities and local employment and training activities for adults and the one-stop delivery system.

5) Negotiate and reach agreement on local performance measures with elected officials and the Governor.

6) Assist the Governor in the development of the statewide employment statistics system.

7) Coordinate the workforce investment activities carried out in the local area with economic development strategies and develop other employment linkage.

8) Promote the participation of private sector employers in the statewide workforce investment system and ensure connecting, brokering and coaching activities through intermediaries such as the one-stop operations in the local area or through other organizations.

Nomination forms may be obtained from Nevada Business Services at 920 West Owens, Las Vegas or may be downloaded from the Internet at nbsworks.org. Please forward nomination forms along with the resumes of persons you feel meet this criteria by September 10, 1999 to:

Southern Nevada Job Training Board
c/o Nevada Business Services
P.O. Box 270429
Las Vegas, NV 89127

For questions, please call 638-8750.