Unintended Pregnancy in the United States

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Unintended pregnancies

• What are they?
• Who has them?
• Why should we care?
• What research do we need?
Pregnancies (are not just births)

Pregnancies =
births + abortions + miscarriages
How do we know pregnancy intentions?

• Right before you became pregnant with your (Nth) pregnancy which ended in (date), did you yourself want to have a, or another, baby at any time in the future?”

  – Yes
  – No
  – Not sure, Don’t know
  – Didn’t care
Asking women: 2nd question

- So would you say you became pregnant too soon, at about the right time, or later than you wanted?
  - Too soon
  - Right time
  - Later
  - Didn’t care
Conventional Measure of Intentions

- **Intended**: a pregnancy that was wanted at the time (or sooner than) it occurred
- **Unintended**: The sum of…
  - “Mistimed”: a pregnancy that was wanted at some point, but occurred sooner than desired
  - “Unwanted”: a pregnancy that was not wanted when it occurred or ever
The numbers, 2008

Total U.S. pregnancies: 6.5 Million
Unintended pregnancies: 3.4 Million
Half of U.S. pregnancies are unintended

- Intended, 49%
- Mistimed, 31%
- Unwanted, 20%
U.S. percent of pregnancies unintended is high

- United States 2008: 51%
- France 2001: 33%
- Italy 2006: 33%

Finer and Zolna 2011; Bajos 2003; Carbone 2009
Unintended pregnancies by outcome

- Miscarriages
- Abortions
- Births

Unintended pregnancies

0
500,000
1,000,000
1,500,000
2,000,000
2,500,000
3,000,000
3,500,000
4,000,000

Unintended pregnancies
Unintended Pregnancy Rate

Unintended births + Unintended abortions + Unintended miscarriages

Population
Unintended pregnancies became more prevalent than intended ones in 2008.
Unintended pregnancy rates vary by age.

The chart shows the unintended pregnancy rates for different age groups in 2008. The rates are as follows:

- 15-17: 35
- 18-19: 88
- 20-24: 104
- 25-29: 76
- 30-34: 50
- 35-39: 28
- >=40: 10
Significant disparities by relationship status

Unintended pregnancy rate, 2008

- Married: 36
- Cohabiting: 198
- Formerly married: 46
- Never married: 43
Large disparities by education

Unintended pregnancy rate, 2008

- Not HS grad: 101
- HS grad/GED: 60
- Some college: 55
- College grad: 29
Disparities by education are growing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Education Level</th>
<th>2001</th>
<th>2008</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not HS grad</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HS grad/GED</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some college</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College grad</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Large disparities by income have grown.

Unintended pregnancy rate

- **<100% of poverty**
  - 2001: 79
  - 2008: 137

- **100-199% of poverty**
  - 2001: 85
  - 2008: 85

- **≥200% of poverty**
  - 2001: 28
  - 2008: 26
Significant disparities by race/ethnicity

Unintended pregnancy rate, 2008

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race/Ethnicity</th>
<th>Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Disparities by race & ethnicity persist across income groups

Unintended pregnancy rate, 2008

- White
- Hispanic
- Black
Variation by state

Unintended Pregnancy Rates, by State, in 2008

Unintended pregnancy rate

- 31–42
- 43–49
- 50–56
- 57–62
- 63–70

*Rates for Arizona, Indiana, Kansas, Montana, Nevada, New Hampshire, North Dakota and South Dakota estimated by multiple regression.
Unintended pregnancies

• What are they?
• Who has them?
• Why should we care?
Unintended pregnancies by outcome

- Miscarriages
- Abortions
- Births

Unintended pregnancies
Increasing proportion of unintended pregnancies end in births

- Births
- Abortions
Poor women are more likely to have a birth from unintended pregnancy.
The least educated women have the highest rates of birth from unintended pregnancies.
Birth rates from unintended pregnancy by race/ethnicity, 2001 and 2008

- **White**
  - 2001: 17
  - 2008: 20

- **Black**
  - 2001: 35
  - 2008: 40

- **Hispanic**
  - 2001: 42
  - 2008: 43
About two-fifths of U.S. births are from unintended pregnancies.

- Intended: 61%
- Mistimed: 26%
- Unwanted: 14%
Implications for Births

- About half of unintended pregnancies end in a birth (51%)
- 40% of all births are from unintended pregnancies
- Birth rates from unintended pregnancies are high among disadvantaged groups
- Birth rates from unintended pregnancies are increasing
Health Consequences: Maternal behavior during pregnancy

% initiating prenatal care in first trimester

% of births recognized in first 6 weeks

- Intended
- Mistimed <2 years
- Mistimed 2+ years
- Unwanted
Health Consequences: Birth outcomes

- % low birth weight
- % born preterm

Bar chart showing:
- Intended
- Mistimed <2 years
- Mistimed 2+ years
- Unwanted
Health Consequences

• Other maternal behaviors during & after pregnancy
  – Diet, prenatal vitamins
  – Smoking, alcohol, drug use
  – Breastfeeding
    • Any, Duration, Exclusivity
  – Well Baby visits
Other Consequences

- Parent relationships
  - Increased conflict
  - Lower satisfaction
- Psychosocial effects
  - Depression, anxiety, stress
Less is know about still other consequences

- Effects on other children
- Effects on maternal and paternal employment
- Education trajectories
- Financial stress
- Food insecurity
Negative Consequences for Births from Unintended Pregnancy


Why study unintended pregnancy?

- Fundamental measure of a population’s reproductive health
- Also a measure of individual women’s autonomy/self determination
- Identify those in need of improved services
Moving forward

• How preferences are formed
  – New models
  – Mixed methods research (quant & qual)

• Measurement of unintended pregnancy
  – Disparities carry over to abortion

• Men’s fertility behaviors

• Teens: patterns of behavior set the stage for future fertility at the individual and population level
Moving forward

• How does unintended pregnancy impact social and economic trajectories, life course:
  – Relationships
  – Family formation
  – Educational goals
  – Career goals
  – Family health and well-being
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Thank You!

www.guttmacher.org