

Empowering Futures: Tackling Teenage Pregnancy in Trenton

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Policy Problem

Planned Parenthood aims to offer recommendations to the New Jersey Department of Health for enhancing teenage pregnancy prevention efforts in Trenton. The goal is to reduce teenage pregnancy rates in Trenton, with a focus on marginalized groups, recognizing the considerable negative impacts on both the mother and child.

Background

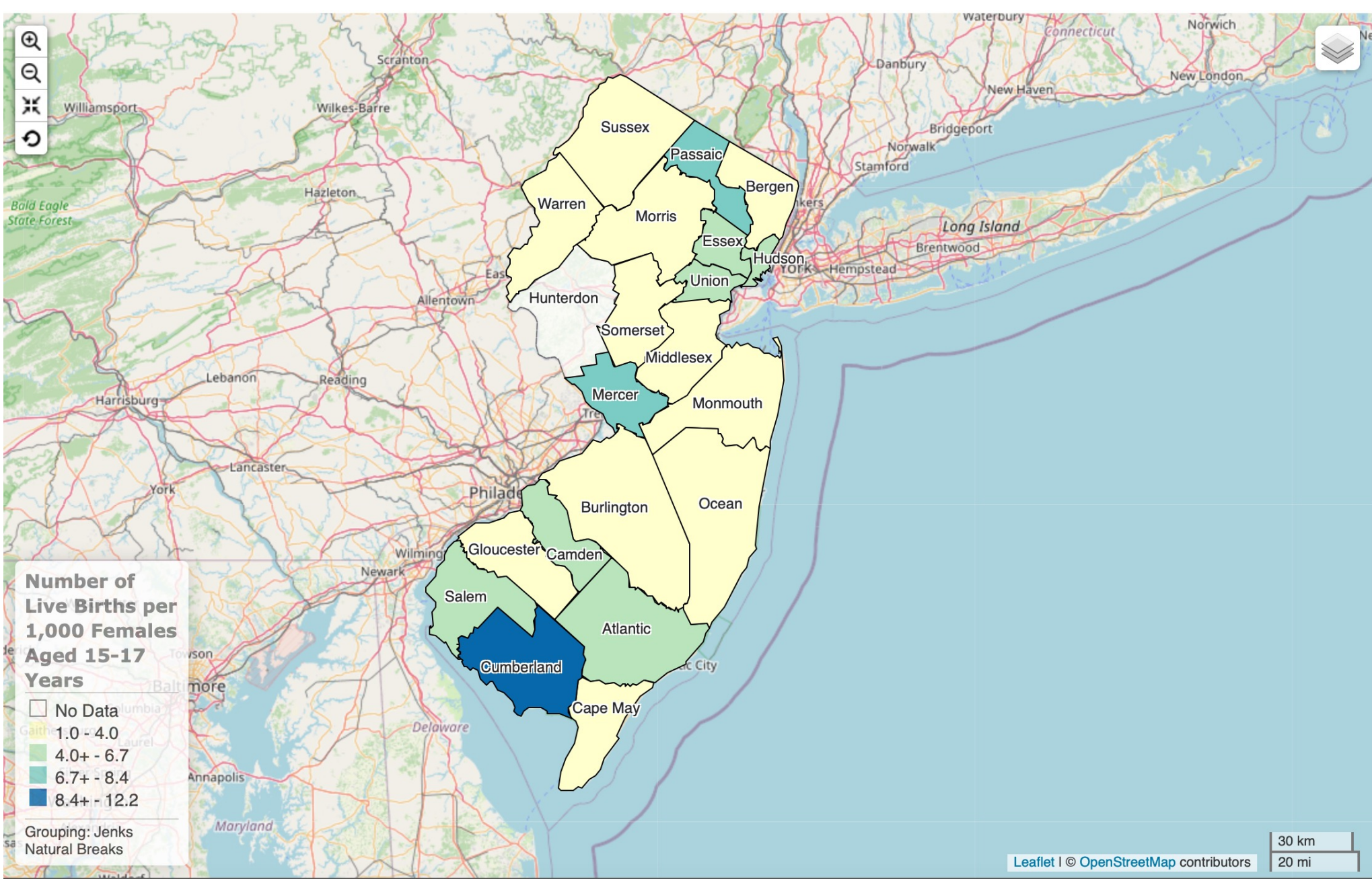
Teenage pregnancy, as defined by UNICEF, is conceiving at an age of 19 or younger (State of New Jersey Department of Health, 2017). In 2015, Trenton’s teen birth rate was nearly six times the state average, at 30.5/1000 compared to 5.8/1000 live births (Trenton Health Team, 2021). The risk factors of teenage pregnancy include lower birth weights, increased infant mortality, higher rates of hospital admission in early childhood, less supportive home environments, poorer cognitive development, and more. Teen mothers face heightened vulnerability to mental health issues and encounter limited access to educational and employment opportunities (Cook and Cameron, 2015).

Options

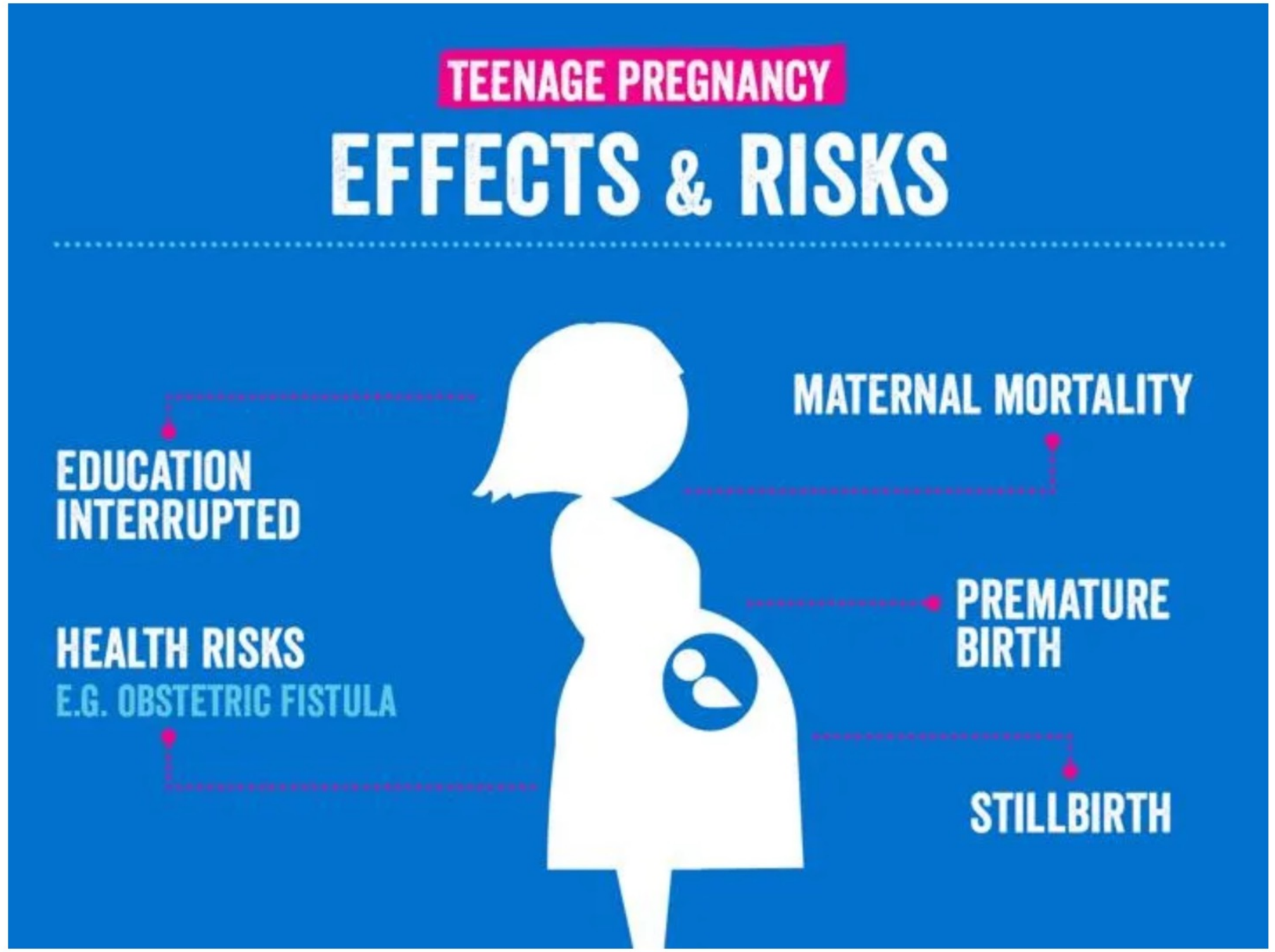
- Comprehensive Sex Education
- Accessible Healthcare Services
- Youth Empowerment Programs
- Addressing Socioeconomic Factors

Analysis and Recommendations

- We propose a two-pronged strategy:
- 1- address underlying risk factors by expanding funding to the Trenton Housing and Economic Development Department, focusing on wealth, education, and residence zones.
 - 2- enhance youth education in Trenton on the effects, risks, and prevention of teen pregnancy to mitigate negative health impacts for both individuals and babies.
- Increased funding to local empowerment and educational groups like NJ PREP and Teen PEP. NJ PREP, a school-based program, combats dropouts, while Teen PEP promotes sexual health education through peer mentoring.
 - Prioritizing these programs over abstinence funding for a more realistic and impactful approach.
 - Address Trenton’s high uninsurance rate of 16.8% in 2017- double the national and New Jersey averages (Trenton Health Team, 2021)- by expanding subsidies for low-income groups to combat healthcare access barriers and socioeconomic and racial disparities, significant factors for teen pregnancy.



This map illustrates Teen Birth Rates by County in New Jersey. Each county is color-coded based on live births per 1000 females aged 15-17 from 2016 to 2020. Mercer County, including Trenton, falls into the second-highest group for teen births, with a rate of 6.7 to 8.4. Source: New Jersey Health Assessment Data, 2020



A concise yet impactful poster by Plan-International highlights the effects of teenage pregnancy on mothers and children. As a charity dedicated to advancing children’s rights and gender equality for girls, Plan-International effectively educated teens on this critical issue. Source: Plan-International, 2023

Limitations

- Funding increase for Housing and Economic Development and local empowerment groups may compete with community needs, affecting initiative feasibility and effectiveness.
- Educational interventions' impacts vary, depending on factors like community engagement and program implementation.
- Using only the uninsurance rate oversimplifies healthcare access; teen pregnancy rates are influenced by diverse factors.

Conclusion

We advocate for a comprehensive strategy to reduce teenage pregnancy in Trenton, focusing on marginalized groups with a teen birth rate six times the state average in 2015. By expanding funding to the Housing and Economic Development Department and prioritizing youth education, we aim to combat underlying risk factors and mitigate health impacts while acknowledging challenges in funding allocation and educational impact variability. It also tackles Trenton’s high uninsurance rate by expanding subsidies for low-income groups, fostering positive outcomes for current and future generations.