



Adolescent Birth Rate Decline in California

Regional Contributions (2010–2020)

From 2010–2020, California’s Adolescent Birth Rate (ABR) continued to decline, resulting in an all-time low and mirroring the national trend.^{1–4} ABR decreases occurred across age and racial/ethnic groups and the state’s geographical regions. This data brief presents 2010–12 and 2018–20 rate estimates by subgroup and examines regional contributions^{5,6} to the overall decline statewide.

Key Findings - Statewide

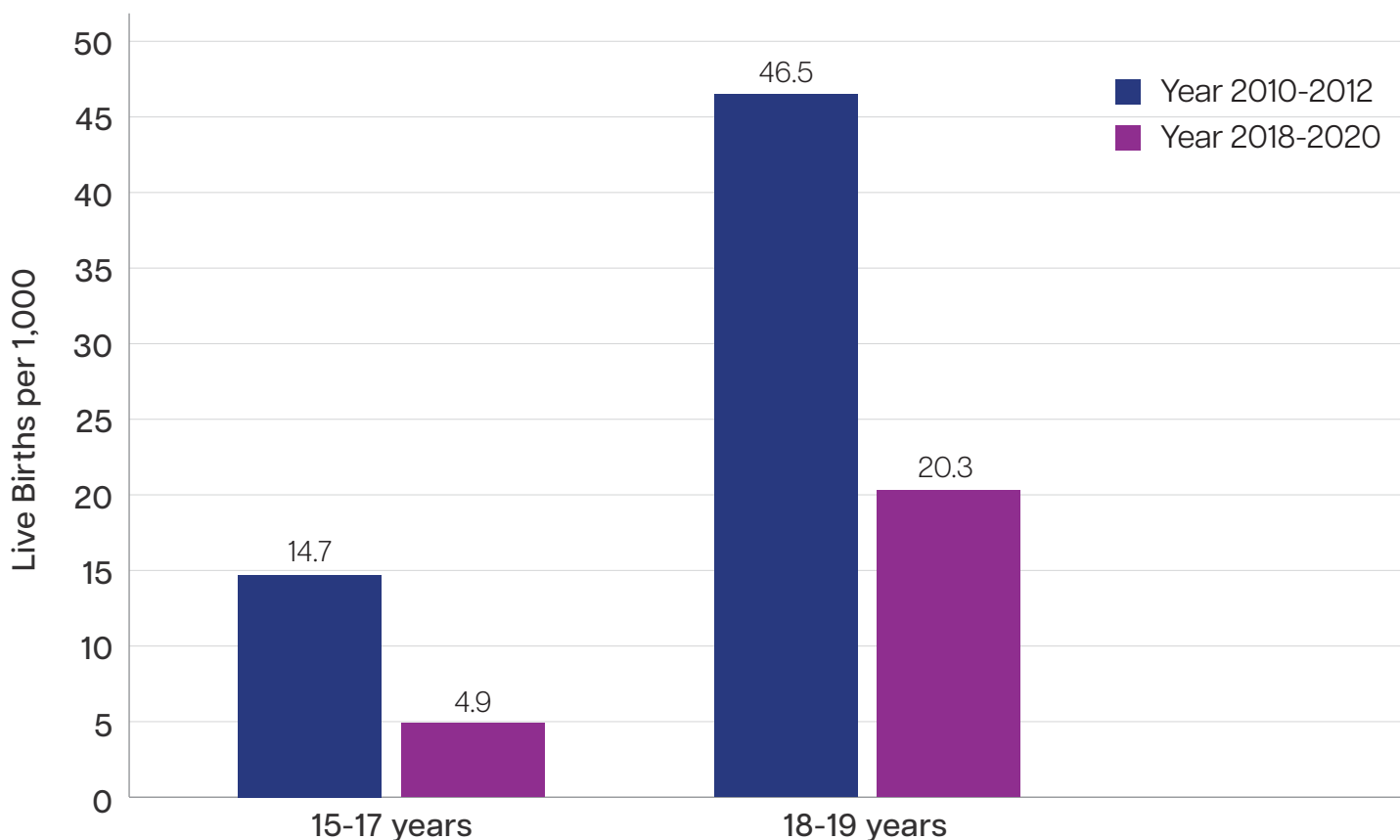
Statewide ABR

- ▶ The ABR for those ages 15–19 years declined from 31.6 live births per 1,000 population (2010) to 10.1 per 1,000 (2020), an absolute difference of 21.5 live births per 1,000, which is a 68% decline.

Statewide By Age Group

- ▶ ABR for ages 15-17 dropped from 14.7 (2010–12) to 4.9 (2018–20) live births per 1,000 (absolute difference of 9.8 live births per 1,000, or 67% decline).
- ▶ Birth rate among adolescents ages 18-19 dropped from 46.5 (2010–12) to 20.3 (2018–20) live births per 1,000 population (absolute difference of 26.2 per 1,000, or 56% decline).

Figure 1. Adolescent Birth Rate, by Age Group and Year

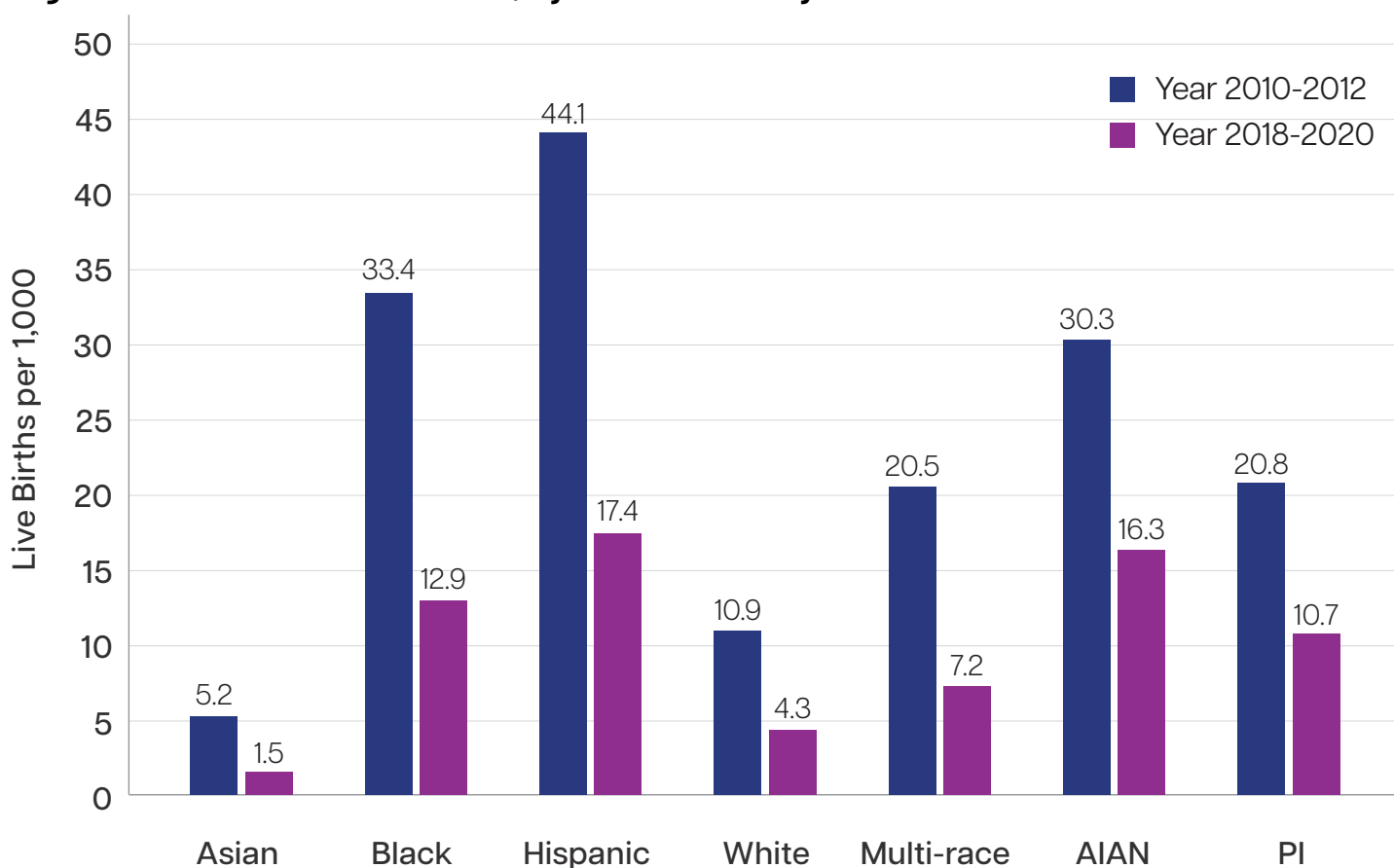


Statewide by Race/Ethnicity

The ABR (ages 15–19) varied substantially by race/ethnicity, and the differences have become more pronounced over time, even as the racial/ethnic-specific ABRs have declined.

- ▶ In 2010–12, the ABR ranged from 5.2 among Asian adolescents to 44.1 among Hispanic adolescents; this is more than an eight-fold difference.
- ▶ In 2018–20, the ABR ranged from 1.5 among Asian adolescents to 17.4 among Hispanic adolescents; this is more than an 11-fold difference.
- ▶ These changes in ABR among Asian and Hispanic adolescents reflect declines of 71.7% and 60.6%, respectively.

Figure 2. Adolescent Birth Rate, by Race/Ethnicity and Year



Notes: Multi-race=Multiple races; AIAN=American Indian and Alaska Native; PI=Pacific Islander

Key Findings - Region and County

Region

Across California's nine regionsⁱ:

- ▶ San Joaquin Valley region had the highest ABR in both 2010–12 (44.8 live births per 1,000) and 2018–20 (19.7 live births per 1,000).
- ▶ San Francisco Bay Area region had the lowest ABR in both 2010–12 (18.2 live births per 1,000) and 2018–20 (6.6 live births per 1,000).
- ▶ San Diego County, a region on its own, had the largest decline at 65.1%.
- ▶ North/Mountain region had the smallest ABR decline at 50.9%.
- ▶ The ABR absolute decline between 2010–12 and 2018–20 ranged from 11.5 live births per 1,000 in the San Francisco Bay Area region to 25.1 live births per 1,000 in the San Joaquin Valley region.

County

The ABR varied widely across California's 58 counties with at least 10 live births in 2018–20:

- ▶ Marin County had the lowest ABR in both 2010–12 (10.7 live births per 1,000) and 2018–20 (4.3 live births per 1,000).
- ▶ Tulare County had the highest ABR in 2010–12 (55.6 live births per 1,000).
- ▶ Kern County had the highest ABR in 2018–20 at 23.3 live births per 1,000, more than five times that of Marin County.
- ▶ Santa Clara County had the largest decline in ABR between 2010–12 and 2018–20 at 70.0% .
- ▶ Mariposa County had the smallest decline in ABR between 2010–12 and 2018–20 at 20.7%.
- ▶ The ABR absolute decline between 2010–12 and 2018–20 ranged from 3.7 live births per 1,000 in Tuolumne County to 32.6 live births per 1,000 in Tulare County.

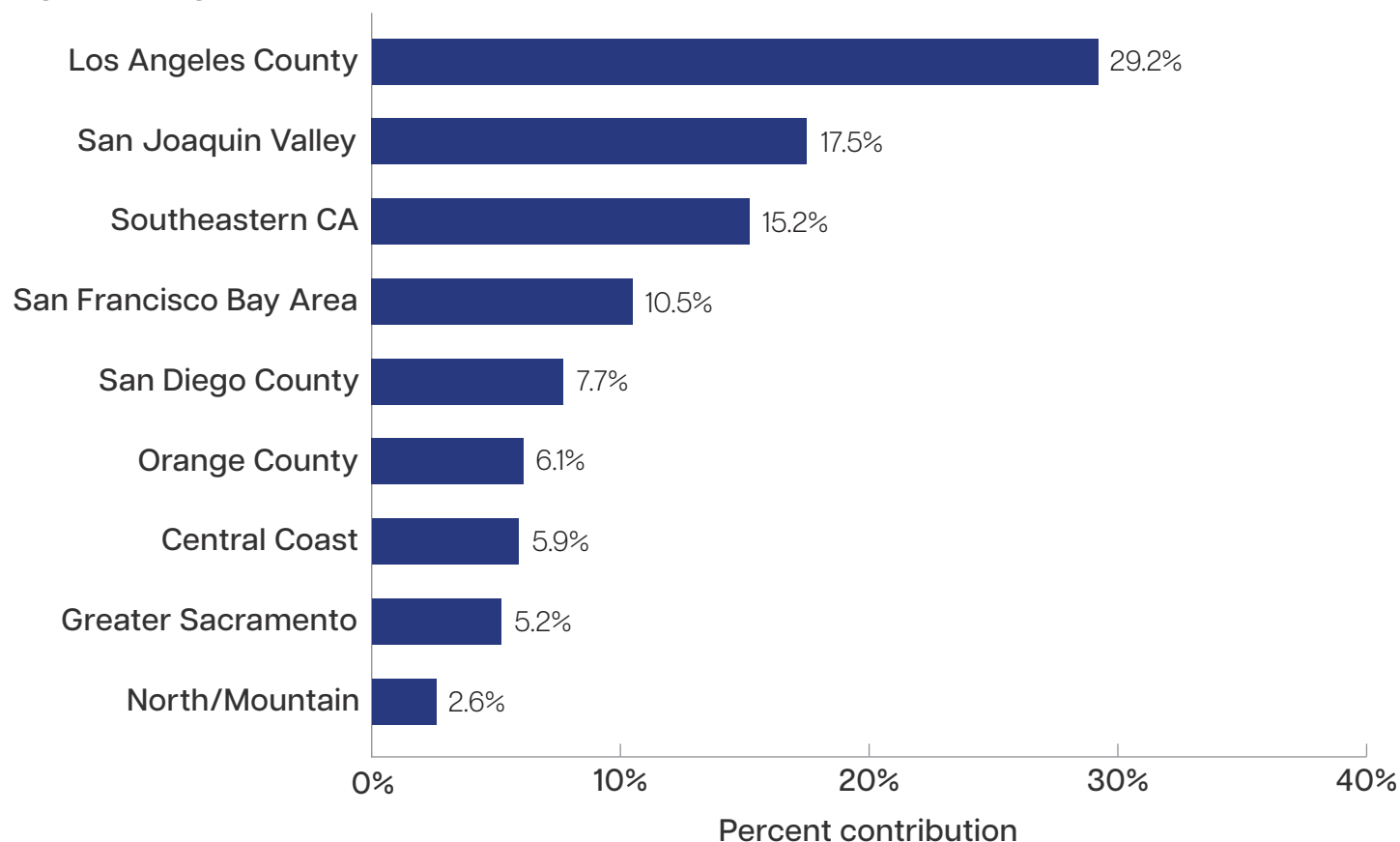
ⁱ The nine regions are groups of counties as defined by the [California's Maternal and Infant Health Assessment](#) survey.

County and Regional Contributions to the Statewide ABR Decline

County and regional contributions to the decline in California’s ABR between 2010–12 and 2018–20 are as follows:

- ▶ Los Angeles County, 29.2%
- ▶ San Joaquin Valley Region, 17.5%
- ▶ Southeastern CA Region, 15.2%
- ▶ San Francisco Bay Area Region, 10.5%
- ▶ The remaining 28% of the decline can be attributed to the following counties and regions:
 - San Diego County, 7.7%
 - Orange County, 6.1%
 - Central Coast Region, 5.9%
 - Greater Sacramento Region, 5.2%
 - North/Mountain Region, 2.6%

Figure 3. Regional Contributions to Statewide ABR Decline Between 2010–12 and 2018–20



Public Health Implications

Unprecedented reductions in the birth rates nationally and in California occurred in the last decade. Preventing unintended pregnancy among adolescents is critical to achieving positive health outcomes across the life course and has been included in the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s list of “Winnable Battles.”^{7,8}

Broad economic and social factors influence adolescents’ behaviors, such as whether they abstain from sex or use contraceptives. Providing access to, and promoting the use of, contraception among sexually active adolescents should reduce unintended pregnancies and births.

The Maternal, Child, and Adolescent Health’s [Adolescent Sexual Health Education Program](#) provides California youth with knowledge and skills to help them make informed decisions, develop life skills and healthy relationships, protect themselves from sexually transmitted infections, and avoid unintended pregnancies. The [California Home Visiting Program](#) and the [Adolescent Family Life Program](#) help pregnant and parenting adolescents by offering services such as counseling on postpartum contraception to enhance pregnancy planning and spacing and to boost educational attainment. Targeted prevention initiatives within high birth rate areas could improve health and social outcomes for all adolescents.

