

Theme : Procreation

New Study Finds TV Programs '16 and Pregnant' and 'Teen Mom' Contributed to Record Decline in U.S. Teen Childbearing¹ Tate

Despite concerns that turning teen moms into reality TV stars has glamorized teen pregnancy, a new study shows that MTV's *16 and Pregnant* and *Teen Mom* have had a more powerful impact in the opposite direction: the series has significantly reduced births to teens.

The research, coauthored by Wellesley College economist Phillip B. Levine and University of Maryland economist Melissa S. Kearney, finds that MTV's *16 and Pregnant* and *Teen Mom* led to a 5.7 percent reduction in teen births, which accounts for around one-third of the overall decline in teen births in the year and a half following the show's introduction in 2009. Kearney and Levine investigated whether the show influenced teens' interest in contraceptive use or abortion, and whether it ultimately altered teen childbearing. To determine the show's impact on teens, Kearney and Levine conducted an in-depth empirical study, analyzing several measures of exposure. They show that *16 and Pregnant* and *Teen Mom* have a large and highly engaged following, and lead teens to search for and tweet about the themes within. They also find that searches and tweets about birth control and abortion increase exactly when the show is on and in locations where it is more popular. According to Professor Levine, "our use of data from Google Trends and Twitter enable us to provide some gauge² of what viewers are thinking about when they watch the show. We conclude that exposure to *16 and Pregnant* and *Teen Mom* was high and that it had an influence on teens' thinking regarding birth control and abortion." Although data limitations prevented Kearney and Levine from conducting separate analyses of abortions, the researchers note that teen abortion rates also fell over this period -- suggesting that the shows' impact is likely attributable to a reduction in pregnancy rather than greater use of abortion.

Sciencedaily online, January 13th 2014

Sum up this article and explain the main ideas using your scientific knowledge.

¹ childbearing : grossesse

² gauge : évaluation