Understanding the Decline of Teenage Fertility in England

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Social Statistics and Demography
England’s teenage fertility has altered dramatically

Source: ONS, analysed by Katie L Heap
England’s teenage fertility has altered dramatically

Graph showing trends in conception rate, fertility rate, and abortion rate from 1998 to 2015.

Source: ONS, analysed by Katie L Heap
The fertility measures

- Under-18 conception (pregnancy) rates per 1,000 women aged 15-17.
- Under-18 abortion ratios (the percentage of conceptions that end in an abortion).
The under-18 pregnancy (conception) rate, by Region

Source: ONS, analysed by Katie L Heap
The percentage of under-18 pregnancies ending in abortion, by Region

Source: ONS, analysed by Katie L Heap
The focus

- This transformation in the wider U.K. context, i.e. societal changes.

- Understanding relationships between area characteristics (e.g. deprivation) and the conception rates and abortion ratios in all of the 328 local authority districts in England between 1998 to 2015.
  - What are these relationships?
  - Have these relationships changed?

- Three geographical sub-populations of England:
  - The Rest of England,
  - Inner London,
  - Outer London.
The measures of deprivation and educational attainment

- The percentage of state-funded secondary school pupils eligible for Free School Meals.
- The percentage of girls attaining level 5 or above in their Key Stage 2 (around age 11) Mathematics tests in state-funded primary schools.
Results
Deprivation’s relationships

- Overall, the more deprived a Local Authority District is, the higher the under-18 pregnancy rate.

- The more deprived an area is, the lower the proportion of these pregnancies which end in abortion (more ending in births).

- However, these relationships are not the same throughout England or the time period...

Source: ONS, and gov.uk analysed by Katie L Heap

The relationship between deprivation (% eligible for Free School Meals) and under-18 conception rates and abortion ratios in the Rest of England in 2015
The relationship between deprivation (% eligible for Free School Meals) and under-18 conception rates in the Rest of England was consistent between 2004 and 2015 for the Rest of England (excluding London).

Source: ONS, and gov.uk analysed by Katie L Heap
Under-18 Pregnancy Rates and Deprivation

The relationship between deprivation (% eligible for Free School Meals) and under-18 conception rates, in the Rest of England and Inner London.

- Inner London *does not* have this relationship between pregnancy rates and deprivation.

- Outer London *does* have this relationship (not shown).

Source: ONS, and gov.uk analysed by Katie L Heap

- Only England (excluding London) has a relationship between deprivation and the proportion of pregnancies ending in abortion.

Source: ONS, and gov.uk analysed by Katie L Heap
Educational attainment at age 11’s relationships

- The relationships between the average level of attainment at Key Stage 2 are similar to those with deprivation:
  - Local Authority Districts with the lowest educational attainment have greater under-18 pregnancy rates.
  - Areas with the lowest educational attainment have smaller proportions of under-18 pregnancies ending in abortion.

- Both of these relationships weakened between 2004-2015.
Under-18 Pregnancy Rates and Educational Attainment

In the whole of England there is a *weakening* of the relationship between pregnancy rates and educational attainment from 2004 to 2015.

Source: ONS, and gov.uk analysed by Katie L Heap
Under-18 Proportions of Pregnancies ending in Abortion and Educational Attainment

- In the Rest of England there is a *weakening* relationship between the proportion of pregnancies ending in abortion and educational attainment from 2004 to 2015.
- There is no relationship in Outer and Inner London.

Source: ONS, and gov.uk analysed by Katie L Heap
What does this mean?

- The level of deprivation remains a strong indicator of whether an area has high pregnancy rates and a lower proportion of these ending in abortion.

- Areas with the least educational attainment, are becoming more similar to the more educated areas.

- But these measures do not explain all of these differences, so what will?
What next - statistics?

- Statistically model these relationships with other area characteristics for the whole period (1998-2015):
  - Ethnic composition of teenagers,
  - Urban/rural
  - Housing cost and provision,
  - Inequality,
  - Teenage Pregnancy Strategy funding.
Data I would access in an ideal world

- Teenage contraceptive use,
- Teenage alcohol consumption,
- The amount of sexual intercourse teenagers are *actually* having (by geographic area and individual characteristics),
- The *quality* and *amount* of Sex and Relationships education,
- The *quality* of local services,
- And the ethnic composition of teenage pregnancy/motherhood/abortion (birth registration).
What next - qualitative?

- Using these models to highlight LADs/wards of interest for qualitative work.
- Interviewing young people and professionals for their experiences and views.
Thank you

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References

- Studies which have found a positive relationship between deprivation and teenage pregnancy:

- Studies which have found a negative relationship between deprivation and teenage abortion:
Additional Graphs
Under-18 Pregnancy Rates and Deprivation

The relationship between deprivation (% eligible for Free School Meals) and under-18 pregnancy rates in the Rest of England.

Source: ONS, analysed by Katie L Heap

- The relationship between deprivation and under-18 pregnancy rates in the Rest of London with more years’ data.
Under-18 Pregnancy Rates and Educational Attainment

The relationship between educational attainment and under-18 conception rates, in Outer London and Inner London.

- The relationship between educational attainment and pregnancy rates experienced a similar decline in Inner and Outer London.

Source: ONS, analysed by Katie L Heap