

Most teenage pregnancies now end with an abortion

Most pregnancies among girls under 18 ended in abortion last year. Out of around 40,000 pregnancies more than 20,000 were terminated - the first time more had chosen this option than become mothers. The figure is higher than 2007, when it just hit 50 per cent, and consistent with a steady upwards trend since the Government started its controversial Teenage Pregnancy Strategy in 1999. Figures out on May 21 will also show that for the first time the number of abortions performed on women living in England and Wales topped 200,000. The teenage pregnancy strategy, which has cost taxpayers more than £300million, was meant to halve the number of conceptions among girls under 18 in England between 1998 and 2010. Ministers have tried to slash teenage pregnancies by freely handing out contraceptives and expanding sex education. But the fall in pregnancy rates has not met Government targets, and in 2007 the rate actually rose.

Teenage pregnancy rates are now higher than they were in 1995. Pregnancies among girls under 16 - below the age of consent - are also at the highest level since 1998. Critics labelled the Government scheme the 'Teenage Abortion Strategy'. Tory MP Julian Brazier said: 'This is a further sickening indicator of a society that has broken down and lost its moral compass.' Phyllis Bowman, of the Right to Life group, said: 'Contraception campaigners and clinics depend for their living on providing contraception and abortion to underage girls. 'The Government listens to them, but they are responsible for this disaster. 'We have the highest level of sexually transmitted disease in Europe and the highest level of sexual activity among teenagers in Europe. 'Unicef says we have the unhappiest teenagers in Europe. 'The young have been deliberately sexualised in a culture which sneers at the idea of telling teenagers they should not have sex.'

Until the mid-Nineties, fewer than four out of ten pregnant teenage girls opted for an abortion. But the number of teenage abortions shot upwards after a contraceptive pill health scare in 1995 and have risen steadily since Tony Blair launched the Teenage Pregnancy Strategy. Last year's increase means abortions among teenagers have gone up by more than a quarter since Labour came to power in 1997. Ministers say the rise in abortion is the result of too much risky sex among teenagers. They have called for a redoubling of efforts to persuade young girls to use contraception. However, health authorities are also stepping up their efforts to make young women aware of the availability of abortion. The Broadcasting Committee-of Advertising Practice, which sets the guidelines for television advertising, has proposed allowing abortion clinics to put out TV commercials for the first time. It also wants to see widespread TV advertising of condoms. The increase in abortions has also been welcomed by prominent figures in the sex education lobby.

Ann Furedi, of the British Pregnancy Advisory Service, has claimed: 'The fact that teenagers felt able to end their pregnancy in abortion is actually a positive sign. 'If they have other plans for their teenage years aside from motherhood, they felt more able to make that choice.' A Department of Health spokesman said: 'One of the key aims of this Government, as set out in the Sexual Health and Teenage Pregnancy Strategies, is to reduce the number of unintended pregnancies and consequently abortions, through better access to contraception. 'Prescribed contraception is available free of charge under NHS arrangements, and the Department of Health has recently invested additional funds to allow for improvements in contraception services.'

Questions

1. Do you agree with abortion? Why or why not ?
2. Do you think that it is people having sex too young that results in the high abortion rate?
3. Do you agree with having sex before marriage ?
4. If you were a pregnant single woman, would you choose to give birth to the child or get abortion? Why?
5. If your daughter is pregnant, what would you suggest her to do ?
6. What would you feel after having an abortion ?
7. Do you think that abortion should be banned by law?
8. If you were a man and your girlfriend got pregnant, what would you do?
9. If you were a man, would you marry a woman that has an experience of having an abortion before? Why or why not?
10. How would you teach your children about the sex issues, including having sex, abortion and so on?