

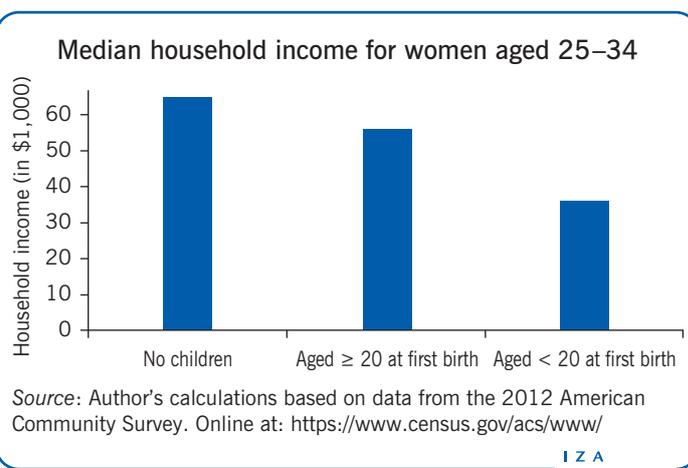
## Teenage childbearing and labor market implications for women

Teenage childbearing is less a cause of inferior labor market outcomes for women than a marker of other social problems in a girl's life

Keywords: teen fertility, education, wages, income

### ELEVATOR PITCH

It is not difficult to find statistics showing that teenage childbearing is associated with poor labor market outcomes, but why is this the case? Does having a child as a teenager genuinely affect a woman's economic potential—or is it simply a marker of problems she might already be facing as a result of her social and family background? The answer to this question has important implications for policy measures that could be taken to improve women's lives.



### KEY FINDINGS

#### Pros

- + Teens who give birth come from disadvantaged backgrounds and may have had inferior labor market outcomes anyway.
- + Traditional policies aimed at reducing teen pregnancy and childbearing have little, if any, impact.
- + Ethnographic studies find evidence of ambivalence toward pregnancy among disadvantaged teens.
- + Long-term factors, like greater income inequality (a potential marker for lack of opportunity/upward mobility), increase rates of teen childbearing.

#### Cons

- Teens who become mothers have lower educational attainment and, subsequently, worse-paid jobs.
- Better information and access to contraception appear to help reduce the likelihood of teen childbearing, if only to a limited extent.

### AUTHOR'S MAIN MESSAGE

Teen childbearing may be a contributory cause of inferior labor market outcomes for women, but its role is not substantial. To a great extent, teen childbearing is a marker of other, existing, social problems in a girl's life. To improve employment and other economic outcomes for women, society must address the underlying social problems that lead women to become teen mothers in the first place, perhaps by concentrating on early childhood education and improving access to higher education.