

~~PRIME MINISTER~~

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SCHOOLGIRL PREGNANCIES

You will remember that we discussed schoolgirl pregnancy rates on occasion while preparing for Questions.

I thought that you might like to know that I followed this topic up with the DHSS statisticians. They told me that they have looked at the birth and abortion statistics and have concluded that, on 1979 figures, one girl in forty four becomes pregnant before her 16th birthday.

You might like to have this in the back of your mind if you are asked about this general area.

MS

*ms*

27 April 1981



✓ MS

**DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & SOCIAL SECURITY**  
Alexander Fleming House, Elephant & Castle, London SE1 6BY

Telephone 01-407 5522

*From the Secretary of State for Social Services*

15 April 1981

N Sanders Esq  
Private Secretary  
10 Downing Street  
LONDON  
SW1

Dear Nuh

CONCEPTION TO GIRLS UNDER AGE SIXTEEN

I hope that your office is not beginning to regard our preoccupation with conceptions to girls under sixteen, as a little obsessive!

Our statistician colleagues here in OPCS have had another look at the statistics, and it seems that your understanding of a 1 in 40 chance of girls becoming pregnant before their sixteenth birthday is of the right order of magnitude. They have analysed the 1979 data on population, births and abortions, and using a number of assumptions and approximations, the cumulative probability of conception before age sixteen works out at 0.0226 or 1 in 44. How this continues in the future depends, of course, on how the patterns of behaviour of 1979 are repeated.

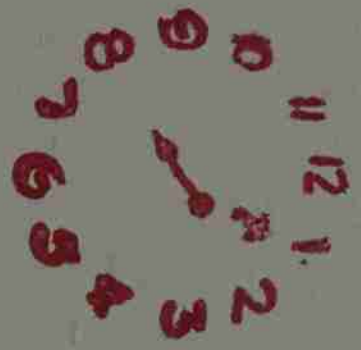
I think this is exactly what you were looking for, but if you would like our statisticians to amplify or discuss any of the figures, they will be glad to do so.

Your ever  
D

D Brereton  
Private Secretary



15 APR 1984





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Nat Health

10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

31 March 1981

BF 14-4-81

Under 16 Conceptions

Thank you very much for your letter of 30 March. I am most grateful to you for letting me have the information in it. I am not sure, however, that it answers the precise question which I had in mind: namely, what is the cumulative probability of conception for an individual girl before her 16th birthday. As you say, taking the whole of the 11 to 15 age group may give a misleading low figure. I should be glad to have any further advice you can offer on this point, I hope before Easter.

I should be very pleased to have a word on the telephone with the Statistician involved if this would help.

N. J. SANDERS

Don Brereton Esq  
Department of Health and Social Security

DB





DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & SOCIAL SECURITY

Alexander Fleming House, Elephant & Castle, London SE1 6BY

Telephone 01-407 5522

*From the Secretary of State for Social Services*

30 March 1981

Nick Sanders Esq  
Private Secretary  
10 Downing Street  
LONDON  
SW1

*Dear Nick,*

UNDER 16 CONCEPTIONS

In your letter of 3 March, you asked if I could manage a reply by the end of the month; I think I am just in time.

On the basis of information supplied to us by OPCS, our statisticians have estimated the number of girls conceiving before their 16th birthday as around 10,000 in the year April 1978 to March 1979. In that year, a total of 3,585 girls gave birth (or would have done so had they not previously had a termination) before their 16th birthday. A further 8,526 reached that state (or again would have done so, had their pregnancy not previously been terminated) while they were 16. On the assumption of an even spread of birthdays for both mother and child throughout the year, our statisticians have allowed three-quarters of the latter figure, (ie, nine months gestation being three-quarters of the year) as having conceived before their 16th birthday, ie 6,395. These figures are for England and Wales only.

Clearly the next question is out of what population. The usual convention is to take the rate for girls aged 11 to 15. On this basis, the estimate of 10,000 conceptions quoted is a rate of 6.4 per 1000. Our officials point out however, that this might underestimate the position, since the majority of girls conceiving would be aged 15. For that age alone, the rate might be as high as 18 per 1000. It would be possible to calculate rates for each age group, but this would take a little while, as it would require a certain amount of additional work.

*Yours ever*

D Brereton  
Private Secretary

30 MAR 1981

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