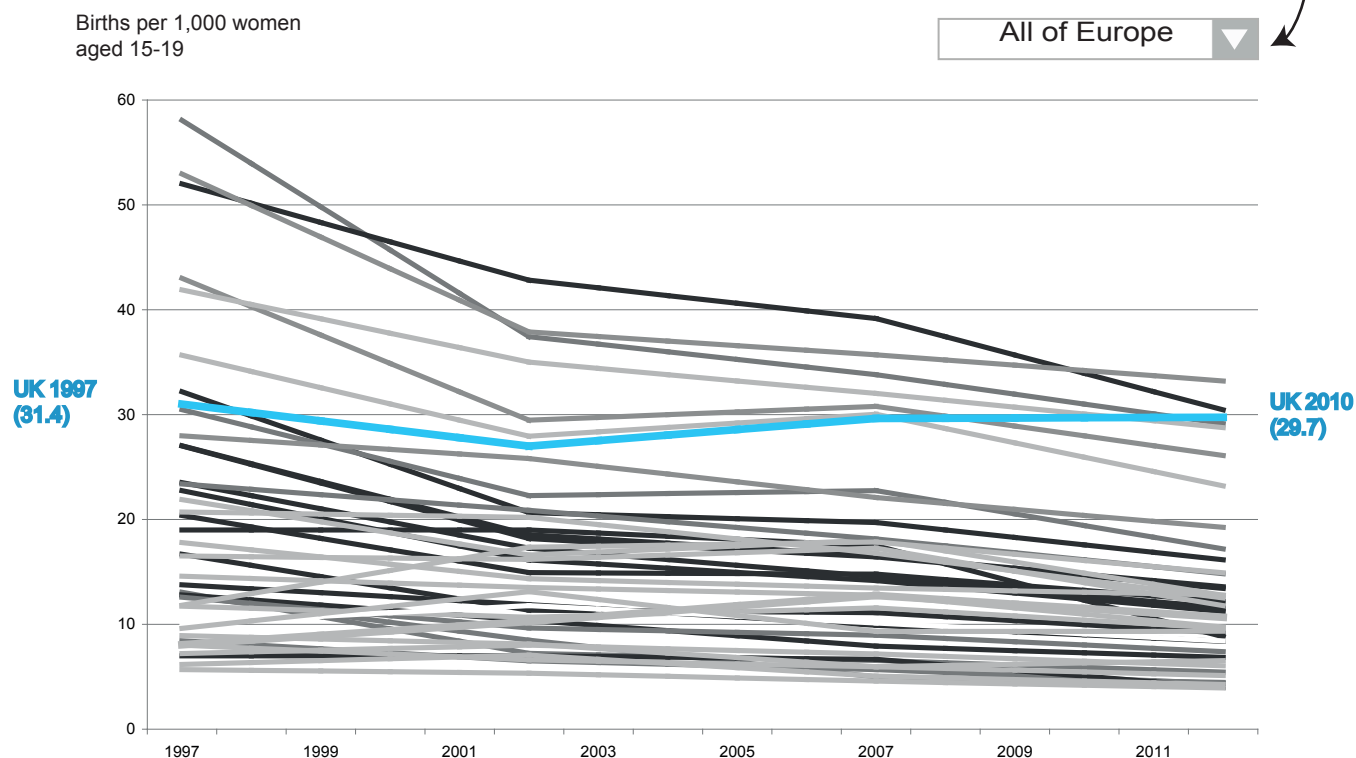


Teenage Pregnancy in Europe: how does the UK compare?

“UK Teen pregnancy rates are the highest in Europe” cry the tabloid headlines. But how much truth is there in this well-known ‘fact’? It seems to depend on who you ask. Data from the World Bank are usually used to create the world rankings of teenage pregnancy rates. However, these data mix up pregnancy with maternity. Data are not available on teenage abortion rates for most countries, making it impossible to compare teenage pregnancy across countries.

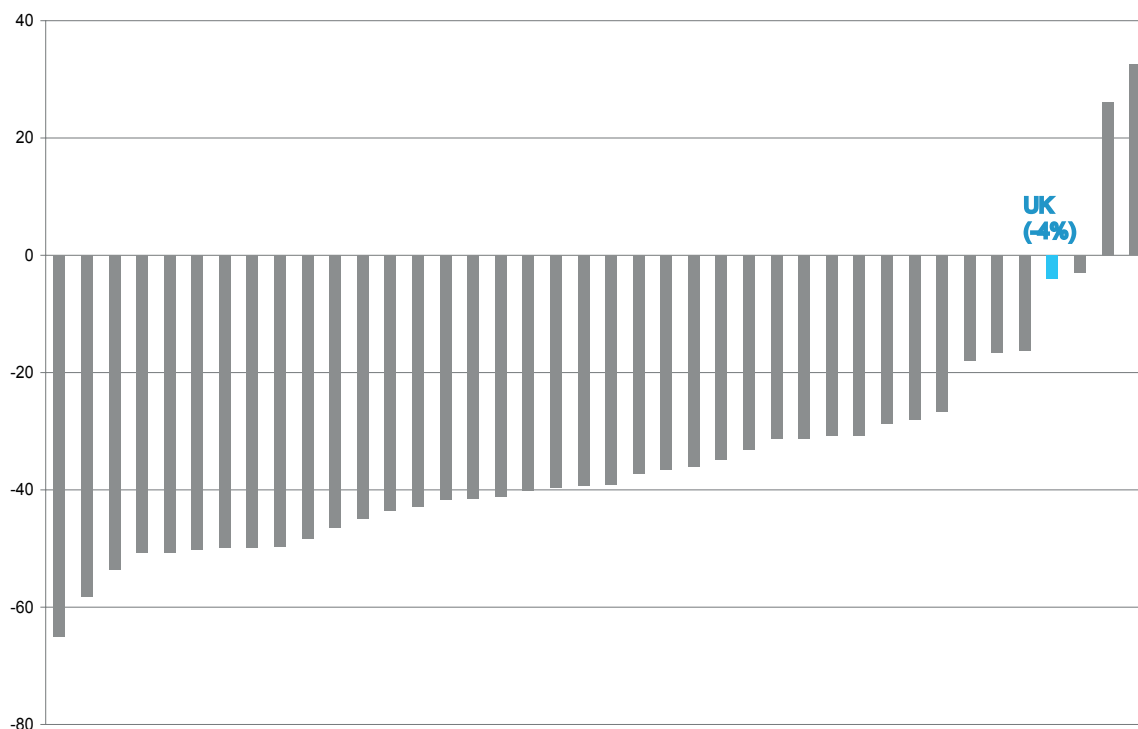
What do the world bank data tell us?

Adolescent fertility rates (1997-2012) in European countries



Adolescent fertility rate of change (1997-2012) in European Countries

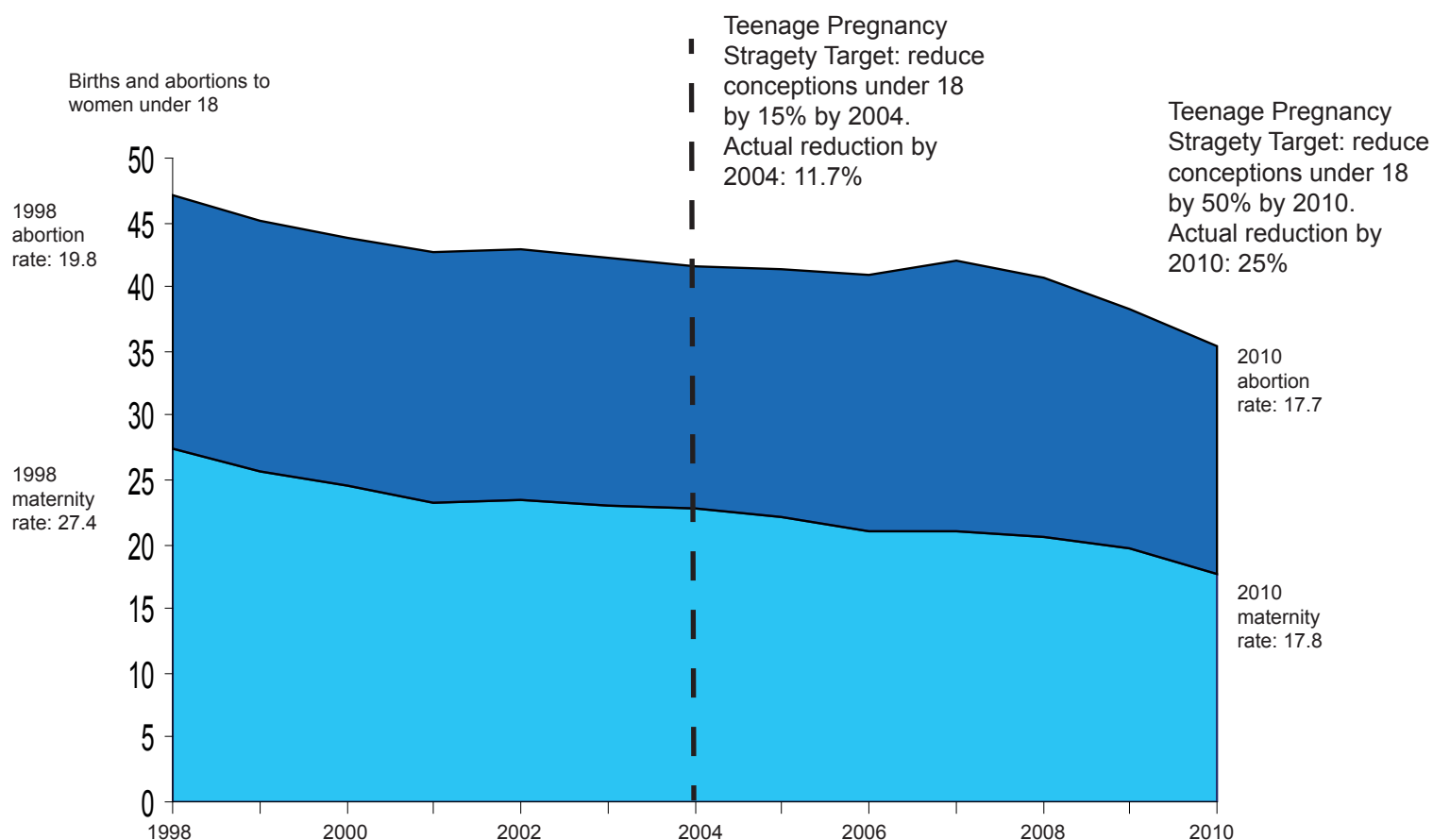
% change in adolescent fertility rate between 1997 and 2012



Teenage pregnancy in England and Wales: a fuller story

So we can see that we are indeed at the top of our class when it comes to teenage births. The Labour government in the late 1990's recognised this was a major societal issue and set up the Teenage Pregnancy Unit who had the ambitious strategy of reducing conceptions to girls under the age of 18 by 50% by 2010. The Office for National Statistics collected data on both births and abortions over this time period. We can use this to see the Local Authorities responsible for delivering this strategy were successful.

England and Wales under-18 birth and abortion rates (1998-2010)



Why do the data look different?

These data are only available for England and Wales (not Scotland or Northern Ireland) so the UK as a whole is not represented.

The teenage pregnancy targets in England and Wales are based on the number of girls **giving birth before the age of 18**. The international data measure births before the age of 20.

The international data measure births only. **We have data on abortions as well as births.** This gives a much more informative picture about what is going on.

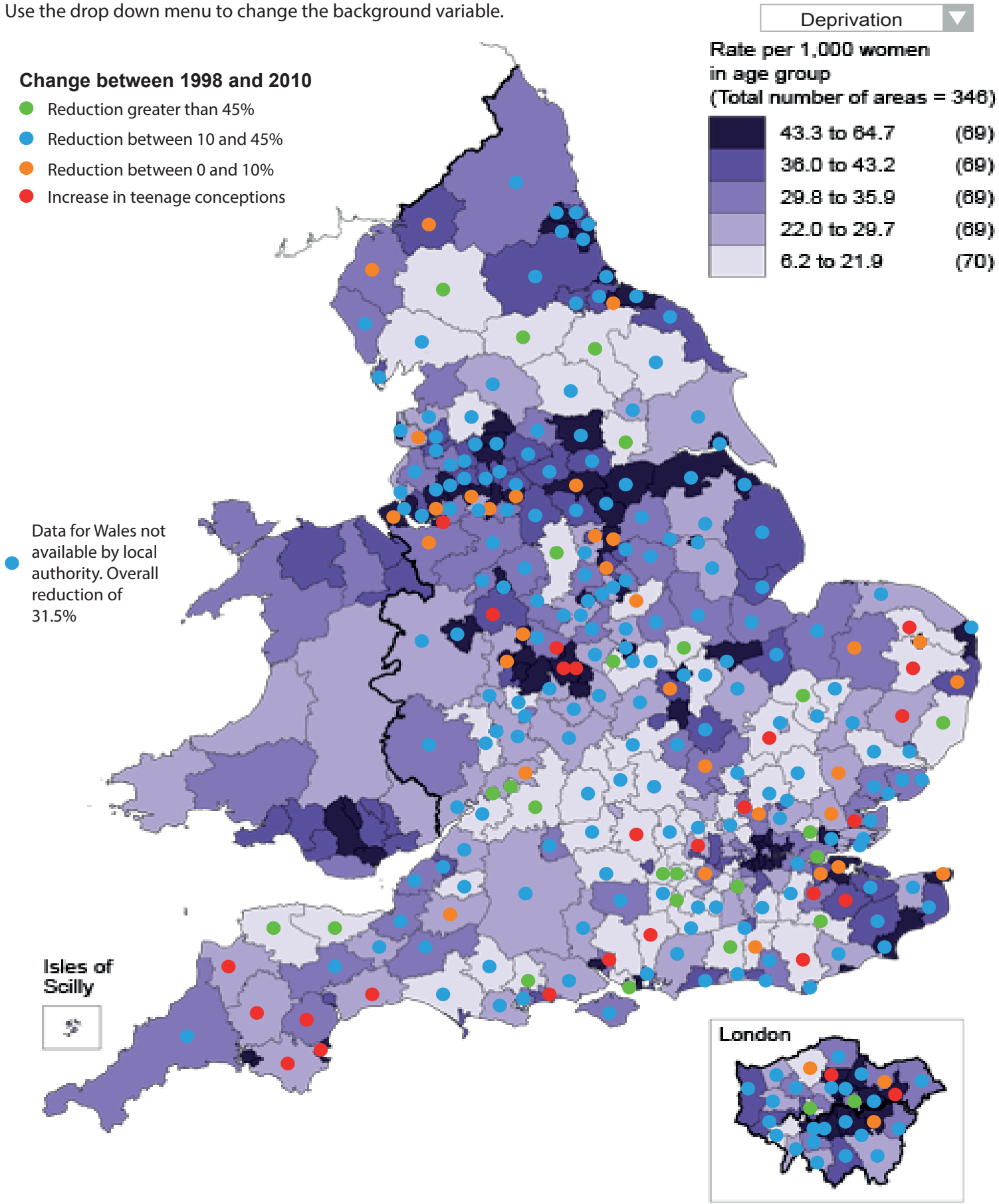
What do the England and Wales data tell us?

Births to women under 18 have decreased in England and Wales.

Rather than being down to an increase in abortions, **there has been a decrease in the overall conception rate.**

The decrease has not been as great as hoped: **the Teenage Pregnancy Strategy target to halve the teenage pregnancy rate by 2010 was not achieved.**

Overall the target of the Teenage Pregnancy Strategy to reduce rates by 50% by 2010 were not met. Was this an impossible task for Local Authorities in the UK? The data below show that there were some regions that managed to meet or exceed the 50% target. The majority of regions reduced teenage pregnancies by between 10 and 45%. However, in some regions teenage pregnancy increased. However over the dots to see the exact figures for your region. Use the drop down menu to change the background variable.



1 To preserve confidentiality, counts for City of London and Isles of Scilly UA have been combined with those for Hackney LB and Cornwall UA respectively.
Source: Office for National Statistics
Contains National Statistics data © Crown copyright and database right 2012
Contains Ordnance Survey data © Crown copyright and database right 2012

Note: background choropleth data are for all pregnancies, and used just for demonstration. Real graphic would use data on teenage pregnancies only