



FATHERLESSNESS IN ILLINOIS

Jack Brewer | October 2022

Fatherhood is foundational to strong families, and strong families are essential to a strong Nation. An absent father affects all aspects of a child's life, from socio-cognitive and socio-emotional development to academic performance and criminality—and unfortunately, the effects of fatherlessness are visible in Illinois.

FATHERLESSNESS IN THE UNITED STATES

- Approximately 18.4 million [children in the U.S.](#) live without a biological father, stepfather, or adoptive father present in the home.
- 23% of children in the U.S. are raised by a single parent. This is more than three times the world average (7%) of [children raised by a single parent](#) and the highest rate of any country on Earth.
- Approximately 41% of children are [born to unwed mothers](#). For women under age 30, the unwed birth rate increases to 53%.
- Fathers are [absent in approximately 80%](#) of single-parent homes.
- Fatherless children are [more likely to suffer from](#) psychosocial development issues, live in poverty, drop out of school, engage in school violence, abuse substances, and enter the juvenile justice system.

FATHERHOOD AND FAMILY IN ILLINOIS

- 41% of Illinois babies are born to [unwed mothers](#), totaling 54,022 births per year.
- 5,379 Illinois babies are [born to teen mothers](#) each year, for a rate of 14 births per 1,000 females aged 15–19.
- 920,000 children [live in single-parent households](#), representing 34% of all Illinois children.
 - This [includes](#) approximately 278,000 Black children (72% of all Black children in the state), 266,000 Hispanic children (40% of all Hispanic children), and 314,000 White children (23% of all White children in the state).

EDUCATIONAL OUTCOMES IN ILLINOIS



- 66% of Illinois [4th-graders](#) scored “below proficient” in reading for their class level.
- 66% of Illinois [8th-graders](#) scored “below proficient” in mathematics for their class level.
- 24% of Illinois [4th-graders](#) are considered “chronically absent” from school.
- 14% of Illinois [high school students](#) do not graduate on time.

CHILDREN’S HEALTH OUTCOMES IN ILLINOIS

- 581,409 Illinois children have [one or more](#) emotional, behavioral, or developmental conditions, representing 24% of all children in Illinois.
- 212,845 Illinois teens have [anxiety or depression](#), representing 9% of all teens in Illinois.
- 48% of Illinois [children and teens](#) do not get regular exercise or vigorous physical activity.
- 42,000 of Illinois teens [report dependence](#) on illicit drugs or alcohol each year.

JUVENILE CRIME IN ILLINOIS

- 36,154 juveniles are [arrested](#) in Illinois each year.
- 834 Illinois youths [reside in](#) juvenile detention, correctional, or residential facilities.

CHILD OUTCOMES IN CHICAGO

- 341,382 students [are enrolled](#) in Chicago public schools, and 90% of those students are minorities.
- 25% of students test [at or above](#) the proficiency level for reading, and 21% test at that level for math.
- 8 out of 10 Black births in Chicago are to [unwed mothers](#).
- 33% of all families in Chicago are led by [single parents](#).
- White students [graduate](#) from a 4-year university in Chicago at nearly twice the rate of Black students (73% vs. 37%).



- Employed Black young adults aged 20–24 in Chicago [earn](#) an average of **\$14,000** per year, compared to an average of **\$34,000** per year for White young adults.
- Nearly **50,000** Chicago youth aged 16–24 are [neither working nor in school](#), which is about **15%** of all Chicago youth.

