

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, including socio-cognitive development, socio-emotional development, academic performance, and criminality. Unfortunately, the effects of fatherlessness are far too visible throughout America, including in **North Carolina**.

THE PREVALENCE OF FATHERLESSNESS

- Approximately **18.4 million** [children in the U.S.](#) live without a biological father, stepfather, or adoptive father present in the home.
- **23%** of U.S. children are raised by a single parent, which is the highest rate in the world and more than three times the [world average](#) of **7%**.
- **Nationally, 80%** of single-parent homes are led by single mothers [with an absent father](#).
- **35%** of children in North Carolina are living in [single-parent households](#).
- **14,521** [children reside in foster care](#) in North Carolina.

FATHERLESSNESS, CHILD DEVELOPMENT, AND EDUCATION

- A U.S. Department of Justice Briefing suggests **85% of children** who exhibit behavior disorders are from fatherless homes.
- National data suggests fatherless children are **279% times more likely** to carry guns and deal drugs than their peers.
- **68%** of North Carolina 4th-graders [scored “below proficient”](#) in reading for their grade level.
- **65%** of North Carolina 4th-graders [scored “below proficient”](#) in mathematics for their grade level.
- **38%** of North Carolina [4th-graders](#) are considered “chronically absent” from school.

FATHERLESSNESS, POVERTY, AND GOVERNMENT DEPENDENCE

- Fatherless children are [four times more likely](#) to live in poverty.
 - Approximately **412,500** [children live in poverty](#)—**18.2%** of all children in North Carolina.
 - **698,000** children are in families [receiving public assistance](#) in North Carolina.