

FATHERLESSNESS IN OKLAHOMA

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 **Oklahoma**.

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 OKLAHOMA

- **310,000** Oklahoma [children](#) live in single-parent households, representing **35%** of all Oklahoma children.
 - This [includes](#) approximately **46,000** Black children (**66%** of all Black children in the state), **63,000** Hispanic or Latino children (**40%** of all Hispanic or Latino children in the state), and **129,000** White children (**27%** of all White children in the state).
- There were **21,149** births to [unmarried women](#) in Oklahoma in 2020, **44%** of all births that year.
 - This [includes](#) approximately **12,086** Black children (**77.6%** of all Black children in the state) and **21,328** White children (**36.2%** of all White children in the state).

- There are about **3,218** [teen births](#) in Oklahoma per year.
- There were **8,052** children in [foster care](#) in Oklahoma as of 2020.
- **206,691** children have [one or more](#) emotional, behavioral, or developmental conditions in Oklahoma or **26%** of all Oklahoma children.
- **105,859** children have a parent who was once [incarcerated](#) in Oklahoma or **11%** of all Oklahoma children.

EDUCATIONAL OUTCOMES IN OKLAHOMA

- **71%** of Oklahoma 4th-graders scored “below proficient” in [reading](#) for their class level.
- **75%** of Oklahoma 8th-graders scored “below proficient” in [mathematics](#) for their class level.
- **26%** of Oklahoma [4th-graders](#) are considered “chronically absent” from school.
- **100,661** Oklahoma [children](#) ages 6–17 repeated one or more grades, **16%** of all children in that age group.
- **15%** of Oklahoma [high school students](#) do not graduate on time.

PUBLIC ASSISTANCE IN OKLAHOMA

- **792,979** infants and children are [receiving](#) WIC benefits in Oklahoma.
- There are approximately **173,405** Oklahoma [children](#) living in poverty, which is about **18.6%** of all Oklahoma children.

