



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 **South Dakota**.

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 SOUTH DAKOTA

- **57,000** South Dakota [children](#) live in single-parent households, representing **29%** of all South Dakota children.
- There were **3,951** births to [unmarried women](#) in South Dakota in 2020, **36%** of all births that year.
- There are about **533** [teen births](#) in South Dakota per year.
- There were **1,683** children in [foster care](#) in South Dakota as of 2020.
- **40,620** [children](#) have one or more emotional, behavioral, or developmental conditions in South Dakota or **23%** of all South Dakota children.
- About **3,000** teens ages 12–17 have [abused](#) alcohol or drugs in the past year in South Dakota.



EDUCATIONAL OUTCOMES IN SOUTH DAKOTA

- 64% of South Dakota 4th-graders [scored](#) “below proficient” in reading for their class level.
- 61% of South Dakota 8th-graders [scored](#) “below proficient” in mathematics for their class level.
- 16% of South Dakota [high school students](#) do not graduate on time.
- On average, South Dakota spends about \$10,049 per [student](#) in public schools.

PUBLIC ASSISTANCE IN SOUTH DAKOTA

- 35,799 households receive [SNAP benefits](#) in South Dakota.
- 15,397 infants and children are [receiving](#) WIC benefits in South Dakota.
- There are approximately 31,584 South Dakota children living in [poverty](#), which is about 14.9% of all South Dakota children.

