



FATHERLESSNESS IN TENNESSEE

Jack Brewer | October 2022

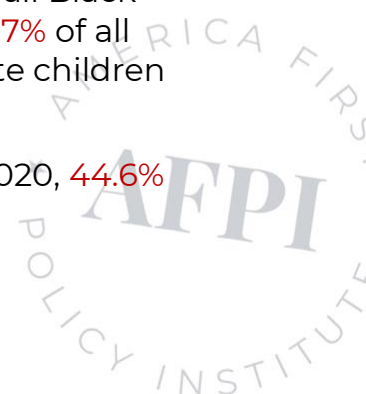
Fatherhood is foundational to strong families, and strong families are essential to a strong Nation. An absent father affects all aspects of a child's life, from socio-cognitive and socio-emotional development to academic performance and criminality—and unfortunately, the effects of fatherlessness are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

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.
- 63% of youth suicide victims, 90% of all homeless and runaway children, 70% of juveniles in state-operated institutes, 85% of youths in prisons, and 80% of rapists [come from fatherless homes](#).

FATHERHOOD AND FAMILY IN TENNESSEE

- 516,000 Tennessee children [live in single-parent households](#), representing 37% of all Tennessee children.
 - This [includes](#) approximately 181,000 Black children (71% of all Black children in the state), 53,000 Hispanic or Latino children (37% of all Hispanic or Latino children in the state), and 244,000 White children (27% of all White children in the state).
- There were 35,037 births to [unmarried women](#) in Tennessee in 2020, 44.6% 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 **4,826** [teen births](#) in Tennessee per year.
- There were **22,359** recorded [divorces](#) in Tennessee in 2020.
- **8,502** children reside in [foster care](#) in Tennessee.

EDUCATIONAL OUTCOMES IN TENNESSEE

- **65%** of Tennessee 4th-graders scored “below proficient” in [reading](#) for their class level.
- **69%** of Tennessee 8th-graders scored “below proficient” in [mathematics](#) for their class level.
- **26%** of Tennessee [4th-graders](#) are considered “chronically absent” from school.

PUBLIC ASSISTANCE IN TENNESSEE

- **451,452** children receive free or reduced-price [lunch](#) in Tennessee, **46.7%** of all children.
- **107,394** infants and children are [receiving](#) WIC benefits in Tennessee, **26.4%** of all children.
- There are approximately **272,337** Tennessee children living in [poverty](#), which is about **18.4%** of all Tennessee children.

