

# FATHERLESSNESS IN ARKANSAS

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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 **Arkansas**.

## **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, which 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 ARKANSAS**

- **245000** Arkansas children, or **38%** of all Arkansas children, live in [single-parent households](#).
- **16,495** [births to unmarried women](#) occurred in Arkansas in 2020, accounting for **47%** of all births in the state that year.
- **2,676** [teen births](#) took place in Arkansas in 2020.
- **4,280** [children reside in foster care](#) in Arkansas.

## **EDUCATIONAL OUTCOMES IN ARKANSAS**

- **70%** of Arkansas 4<sup>th</sup>-graders [scored “below proficient”](#) in reading for their class level.
- **72%** of Arkansas 4<sup>th</sup>-graders [scored “below proficient”](#) in mathematics for their class level.
- **39%** of Arkansas [4<sup>th</sup>-graders](#) are considered “chronically absent” from school.

## **PUBLIC ASSISTANCE IN ARKANSAS**

- **346,176** children in Arkansas [receive supplemental nutrition](#) assistance.
- **175,000** children in families [are receiving public assistance](#) in Arkansas.
- Approximately **142,855** Arkansas [children live in poverty](#)—**20.8%** of all Arkansas children.

