

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.

## ***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.

