

# LOW BIRTHWEIGHT INFANTS

Low birthweight predicts later difficulties for Oklahoma babies. Most of the infants who die each year are born too small. Of those who live, one in four will experience serious health and/or developmental problems. As they grow, depression, anxiety, hyperactivity and aggression often create unmanageable social difficulties.

Each year almost four thousand Oklahoma babies (3,986 average annual, 2001–2003) are born too small (weighing less than 5 ½ pounds). The lower the birthweight, the greater the harm. One in six of Oklahoma’s low birthweight infants (639 annual average, 2001–2003) is born very, very tiny (weighing less than 3 pounds, 5 ounces).

The proportion of Oklahoma babies born too small slowly and steadily continues to worsen (7.9% of all births, 2001–2003) when compared to the three year period just one year earlier (7.8% of all births, 2000–2002). Comparable rates worsen in most (45 of 77) Oklahoma counties.

This trend has continued for years. A higher proportion of Oklahoma babies (7.9% of all births) are born too small (weighing less than 5 ½ pounds) today as compared to those born in the mid-1990’s (7.1% of all births), with such rates worsening in the majority of Oklahoma’s counties (53 of 77). Currently, the highest and worst low birthweight rate (17.3% of all births to mothers living in the county) is found in Greer County; the lowest and best (4.5% of all births to mothers living in the county) is in Le Flore County.

Trends are much the same for Oklahoma’s smallest infants (weighing less than 3 pounds, 5 ounces) whose rate of birth (1.3% of all births) is higher today as compared to the mid-1990’s (1.2% of all births), with such rates also worsening in the majority (48 of 77) of Oklahoma’s counties during the same period. Currently, the highest and worst very low birthweight rate (3.7% of all births to mothers living in the county) is found in Harper County; the lowest and best (0.0% of all births to mothers living in the county) is in six Oklahoma

counties (Alfalfa, Dewey, Roger Mills, Cimarron, Ellis and Nowata).

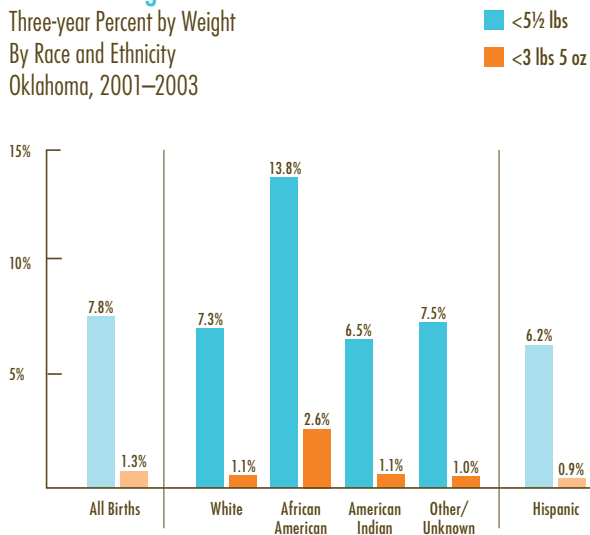
The rate of African American babies born too small (13.8% under 5 ½ pounds; 2.6% under 3 pounds, 5 ounces) is double the rate for White infants (7.8% under 5 ½ pounds; 1.3% under 3 pounds, 5 ounces). By race, the best low birthweight rate is recorded for American Indian infants (6.5% under 5 ½ pounds; 1.1% under 3 pounds, 5 ounces). Hispanic mothers, who may be of any race, have an even lower rate of babies born too small (6.2% under 5 ½ pounds; 0.9% under 3 pounds, 5 ounces).

While early prenatal care is known to improve these rates, well over one-third (38.2%, 2001–2003) of Oklahoma’s babies are born to mothers who failed to receive the recommended level of prenatal care.

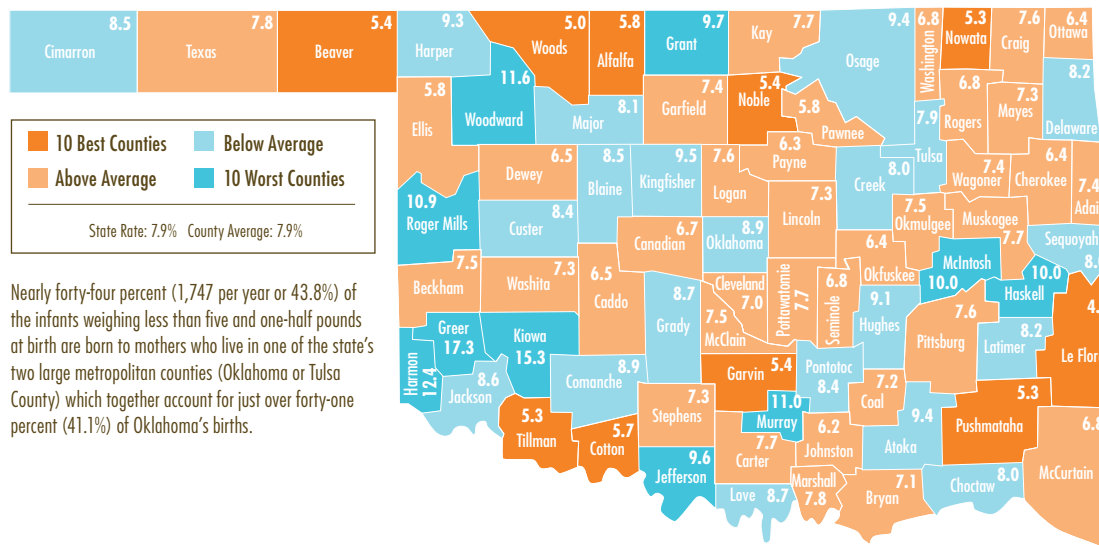
Ranking near the middle of all the states, Oklahoma’s rate of low birthweight infants remains average relative to other parts of the country. Oklahoma is ranked 27th among the fifty states during the most recent year (2002) compared.

## Low Birthweight Infants

Three-year Percent by Weight  
By Race and Ethnicity  
Oklahoma, 2001–2003



## Three-Year Percent of Infants Born Weighing Less than 5 ½ Pounds (2001–2003)



Nearly forty-four percent (1,747 per year or 43.8%) of the infants weighing less than five and one-half pounds at birth are born to mothers who live in one of the state’s two large metropolitan counties (Oklahoma or Tulsa County) which together account for just over forty-one percent (41.1%) of Oklahoma’s births.

# BIRTHS TO TEENS

Young mothers and their children face bleak futures. Each young mother is more likely to be poor, to be a victim of physical violence, to have another child before reaching adulthood, to drop out of school, to have unsteady employment, to be on public assistance at some point in her life, to be less skilled, and to experience marital instability compared to peers who delay childbearing until age twenty or later. Each infant is more likely than other babies to be born too small, to die before their first birthday, and to face a future of living in poverty with an unstable family.

About seventy-four hundred (7,352 average annual, 2001–2003) babies are born annually to Oklahoma women under the age of twenty. Each year more than five thousand (5,029) of those babies are born to teen mothers ages 18 and 19. Just over twenty-three hundred (2,323) Oklahoma school-age girls (age 17 and under) have babies. One hundred four of those school age girls is age fourteen or younger. For the latest year recorded (2003), the youngest is only eleven.

The rate of births to Oklahoma teens continues to decline (29.8 births per 1,000 girls ages 15 through 17; 96.2 births per 1,000 girls ages 18 and 19; 2001–2003) when compared to the three-year period one year earlier (31.1 births per 1,000 girls ages 15 through 17; 97.6 births per 1,000 girls ages 18 and 19; 2000–2002). Birth rates for both age groups show some improvement in a majority of Oklahoma’s counties (51 of 77 for girls ages 15 through 17; 41 of 77 for older teens ages 18 and 19).

The progress made in decreasing the high Oklahoma birth rate to young teens of the mid-1990’s (from 38.1 to 29.8 births per 1,000 girls ages 15 through 17; from 103.1 to 96.2 births per 1,000 teens ages 18 and 19) is evident at the county level where rates for both ages improved in nearly every Oklahoma county (65 of 77 for girls ages 15 through 17; 57 of 77 for older teens ages 18 and 19). Currently, the highest and worst rate for girls ages 15 through 17 (55.8 births per 1,000) is found in Choctaw County; the lowest and best (3.9 births per 1,000) is in Woods County. The highest and worst rate

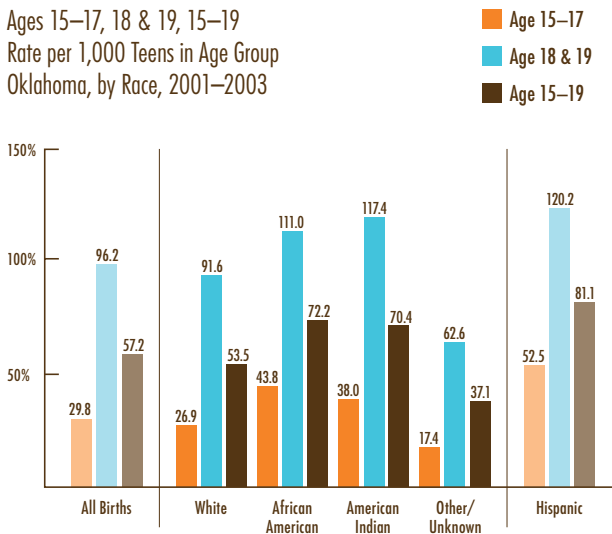
for older teens ages 18 and 19 (166.7 births per 1,000) is found in Adair County; the lowest and best (29.6 births per 1,000) is in Payne County.

The rate of teen birth among African Americans (43.8 per 1000 young teens age 15 through 17; 111.0 per 1000 older teens age 18 and 19) and American Indians (38.0 per 1000 young teens age 15 through 17; 117.4 per 1000 older teens age 18 and 19) is substantially higher than for White teens (26.9 per 1000 young teens age 15 through 17; 91.6 per 1000 older teens age 18 and 19). The young teen birth rate (52.5 per 1000) for Hispanic youth, who may be of any race, is double that for White youth (26.9 per 1000).

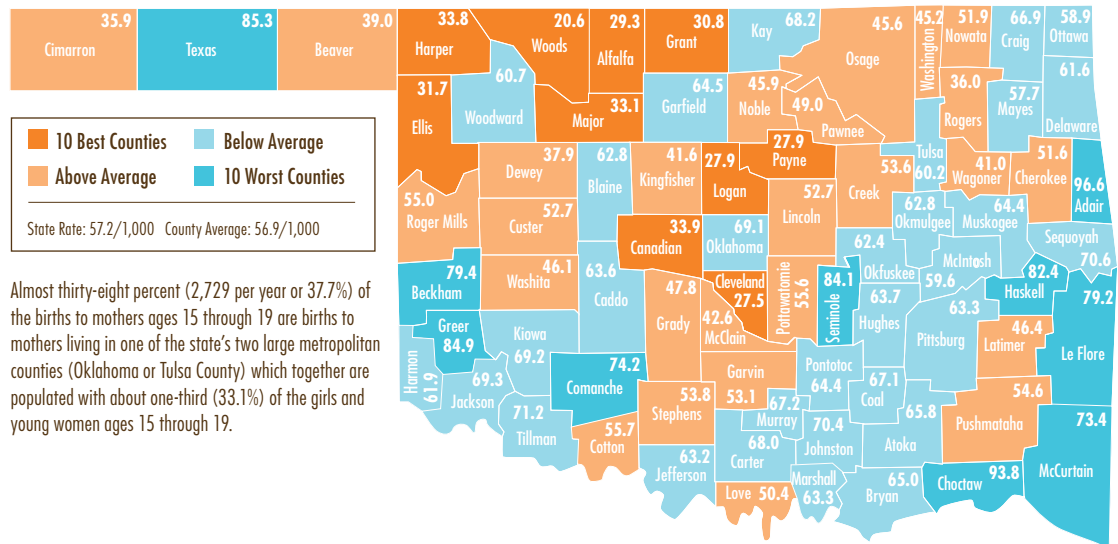
Oklahoma’s young teen childbearing rate was substantially above other states in 1980, but by the late 1990’s, the gap had narrowed. Even so, with births to teens ages 15 through 19 ranked at forty-four, Oklahoma remains among the worst ten states in the nation during the most recent year (2002) compared.

## Births to Teens

Ages 15–17, 18 & 19, 15–19  
Rate per 1,000 Teens in Age Group  
Oklahoma, by Race, 2001–2003



## Three-Year Rate of Births Per 1,000 Female Teens Ages 15–19 (2001–2003)



Almost thirty-eight percent (2,729 per year or 37.7%) of the births to mothers ages 15 through 19 are births to mothers living in one of the state’s two large metropolitan counties (Oklahoma or Tulsa County) which together are populated with about one-third (33.1%) of the girls and young women ages 15 through 19.

# CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT

The cycle of child abuse and neglect threatens Oklahoma's future generations. Young victims often experience related childhood problems. Half suffer delay in their development or serious physical or emotional impairments. Attachment disorders are common. School performance suffers. Poor children, low birthweight infants, infants born premature, and children with disabilities, chronic illness or developmental delay are at high risk for abuse from their caregivers. The cycle continues. Today's victims often become tomorrow's abusers.

The Oklahoma Department of Human Services (OKDHS) investigates almost fifty thousand (49,737, Fiscal Year 2002–Fiscal Year 2004) incidents each year which contain allegations of serious or immediate threats to a child's safety. On average, OKDHS substantiates that over thirteen thousand (13,074) of those incidents are abuse and/or neglect.

Recent (Fiscal Year 2002–Fiscal Year 2004) rates of confirmed child abuse and/or neglect in Oklahoma drop

slightly when compared to the three-year period just one year earlier (Fiscal Year 2001–Fiscal Year 2003). Oklahoma abuse and neglect rates move from 15.0 to 14.8 confirmations per 1,000 children in the community, with comparable rates also improving in the just over half of Oklahoma's counties (40 of 77).

Fortunately, the record high rate of child abuse and/or neglect posted in Oklahoma during the late 1990's (17.8 confirmations per 1,000 children, Fiscal Year 1998–Fiscal Year 2000) has declined substantially. Unfortunately, today's rates (14.8 confirmations per 1,000 children) still remain above those recorded before the rates peaked in the late 1990's (14.3 confirmations per 1,000 children, Fiscal Year 1995–Fiscal Year 1997). Rates worsened in most (44 of 77) Oklahoma counties since the mid-1990's. Currently, the highest and worst proportion of children confirmed to be victims of child abuse and/or neglect (49.5 per 1,000) is found in Coal County; the lowest and best (0.4 per 1,000) is in Cimarron County.

Fifty-one Oklahoma children died from child abuse or neglect during Fiscal Year 2004, nearly doubling the

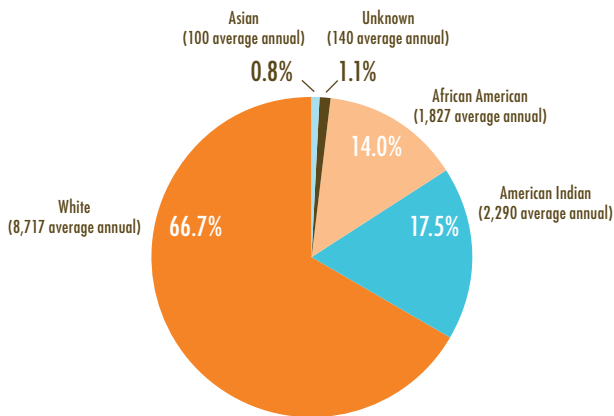
number of deaths just one year earlier (27, Fiscal Year 2003). Among this year's record high deaths are twenty-three girls and twenty-eight boys of all races, most very young. At their death, twenty-three (45.1%) were less than one year of age, fourteen (27.5%) were toddlers (ages one and two), and eleven (21.6%) were barely old enough to attend preschool or kindergarten (ages three through six). The dead included three (5.9%) school age youth (ages seven and older).

Two-thirds (66.7%) of confirmations of abuse and/or neglect in Oklahoma involve children who are White. However, while non-White children comprise only about one-fourth (24.8%) of the child population, they account for almost one-third (32.3%, excluding those whose race is not known) of the confirmed child abuse and/or neglect incidents.

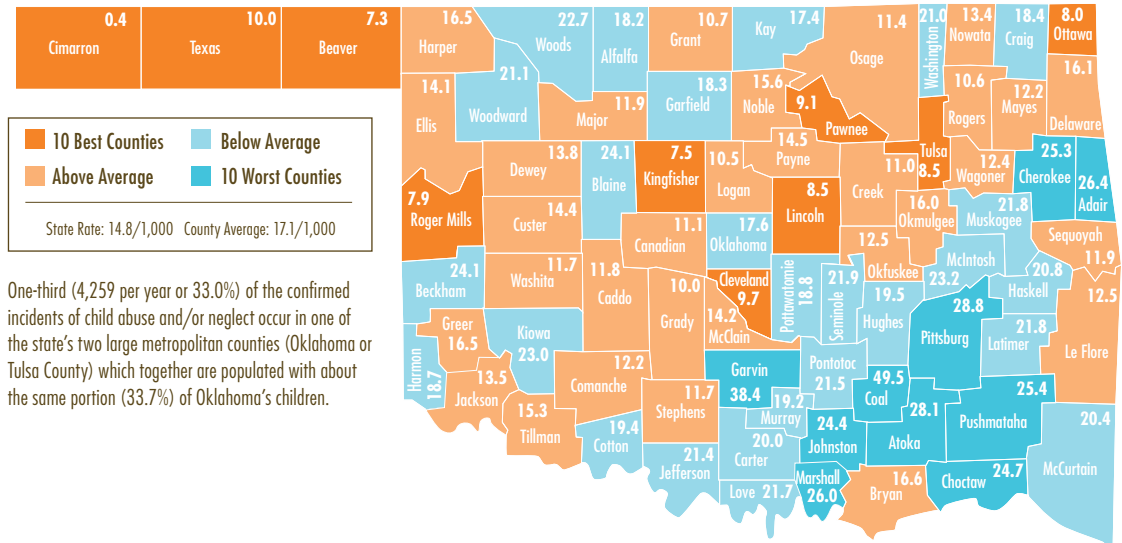
During the most recent years for which comparison data is available, Oklahoma ranks in the bottom half of all states (39th) in the rate of child abuse and neglect the state substantiates per 1000 children in the state (15.5 per 1000 children, 2000-2002).

## Child Abuse and Neglect Confirmations

By Race of Child  
Oklahoma, FY 2002–FY 2004



## Three-Year Rate of Abuse or Neglect Confirmations Per 1,000 Children (FY2002–FY2004)



One-third (4,259 per year or 33.0%) of the confirmed incidents of child abuse and/or neglect occur in one of the state's two large metropolitan counties (Oklahoma or Tulsa County) which together are populated with about the same portion (33.7%) of Oklahoma's children.

## HIGH SCHOOL DROPOUTS

Lack of education threatens Oklahoma children and youth. Youth not completing high school face a lifetime of problems, often including poverty, little employment opportunity, poor earning ability, and criminal involvement. Unemployment rates for adult workers are twice as high for dropouts than for graduates. The majority of Oklahoma inmates are high school dropouts. Children of high school dropouts are at a higher risk of quitting school themselves.

Almost eight thousand (7,883 average annual, School Year 2001/2002 through School Year 2003/2004) young Oklahomans quit school without graduating each year. About sixty-five hundred (6,424) of those are under age 19 and quit during high school.

One of every four (25.0%) students in Oklahoma starting high school as a freshman disappears from the roster prior to graduation. While some transfer out of state, switch to private schools, become incarcerated or even die, dropouts comprise the large majority of

Oklahoma students lost over this four-year period.

The methodology used to calculate Oklahoma high school dropout rates has recently been changed in several ways. (see 2004 KIDS COUNT Factbook). After this methodology has been used without further substantial change for at least one more year, Oklahoma Kids Count can return to comparing changes over time.

Under the new method of calculation, Oklahoma's high school dropout rate averages 3.7% during the most recent three-year period (School Year 2001/2002 through School Year 2003/2004). Currently, the highest and worst rate of children leaving high school each year without graduating (5.1%) is found in Kay County; the lowest and best (0.3%) is in Grant County.

The proportion of high school dropouts who are girls (45.8%) and the proportion who are boys (54.2%) changes little from year to year (School Year 2001/2002 through School Year 2003/2004). Seventeen remains the most common age an Oklahoma dropout leaves high school. Compared to any other grade, the largest numbers

leave school during the tenth grade. Increases in the number of students currently leaving school in the ninth grade now position ninth graders at a very close second.

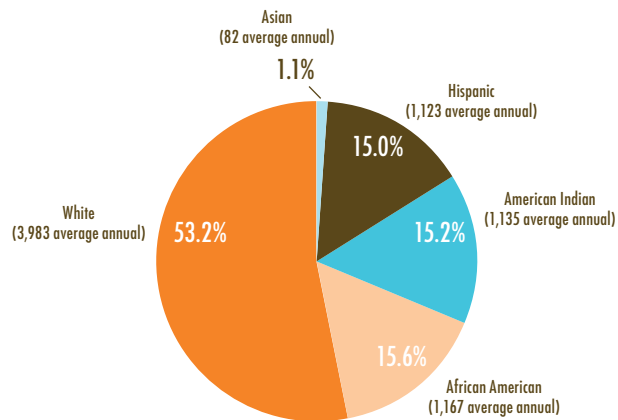
During the most recent three-year period (School Year 2001/2002 through School Year 2003/2004) more than half (3,983 per year or 53.2%) of all children failing to finish high school are White. However, while African American children comprise eleven percent (11.0%) of the child population, they account for a higher proportion (15.6%) of the high school dropouts. Similarly, American Indian children make up twelve percent (12.0%) of Oklahoma's child population and more than fifteen percent (15.2%) of Oklahoma's dropouts.

During the most recent year for which comparison data is available (2003), Oklahoma ranks near the top of all states (15th) in the percent of teens who are high school dropouts (7.0% of those ages 16 through 19).

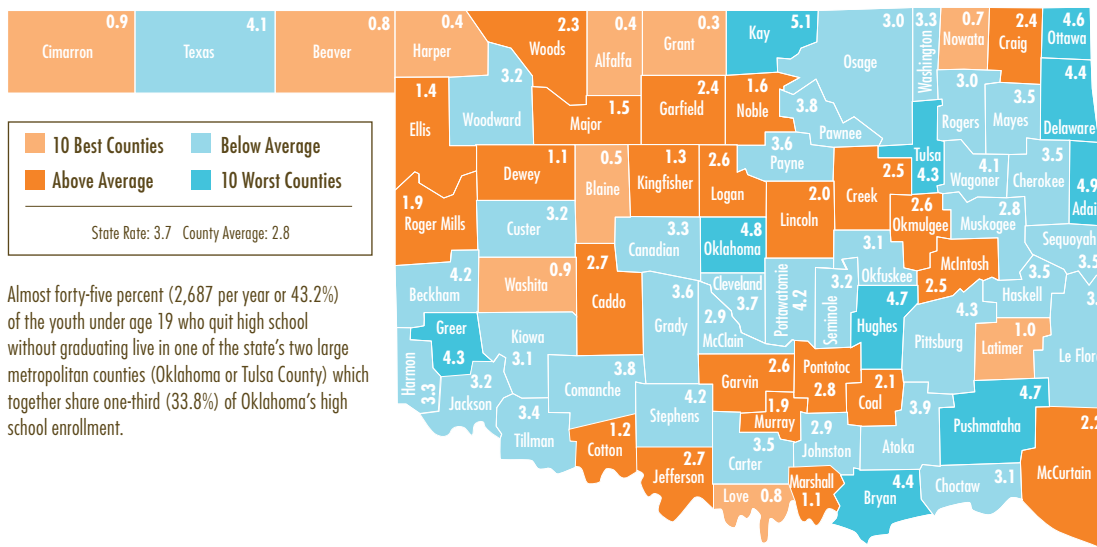
### Students Quitting School Without Graduating

All Ages, by Race

Oklahoma, School Years 2001/2002 –2003/2004



### Three-Year Rate of Youth Under Age 19 Dropping Out of High School (School Year 2001/2002 through 2003/2004)



Almost forty-five percent (2,687 per year or 43.2%) of the youth under age 19 who quit high school without graduating live in one of the state's two large metropolitan counties (Oklahoma or Tulsa County) which together share one-third (33.8%) of Oklahoma's high school enrollment.

# JUVENILE VIOLENT CRIME ARRESTS

Youth engaging in murder, rape, robbery and aggravated assault place themselves and their communities at risk. Children at higher risk for involvement in violence and crime include boys born to teen mothers, children from families whose parents never completed high school and young people doing poorly in school. Victims of child abuse and neglect are more likely than others to later be arrested for delinquent behavior, crimes of violence or prostitution. A young poor child is more likely than a non-poor one to be a current victim and a later perpetrator of violent crime.

Each year almost twenty-five thousand (24,684 in 2003) criminal arrests involve juveniles. Oklahoma children and youth account for one of every seven arrests (14.8% of arrests for any crime; 14.4% of arrests for violent crimes).

Just under a thousand (951 average annual, 2001–2003) Oklahoma youths from the ages of 10 through 17

are arrested each year for committing a violent crime. On average, nineteen are arrested for murder, one for manslaughter, 52 for forcible rape, 161 for robbery and 719 for aggravated assault. Four of every five (79.34%, 2001–2003) youth arrested for violent crimes in Oklahoma are male.

The recent (2001–2003) proportion of Oklahoma youths from the ages of 10 through 17 arrested for violent crimes decreases when compared to the three-year period just one year earlier (2000–2002). Oklahoma violent crime arrest rates for this age group move from 246.7 to 236.6 per 100,000 youth, with comparable rates staying the same or improving in just over half of Oklahoma's counties (40 of 77).

The proportion of Oklahoma youths arrested for violent crimes continues to improve from the record highs recorded during the 1990's. The most recent juvenile violent crime arrest rate (236.6 arrests per 100,000 youth age 10–17, 2001–2003) is substantially improved over that of the comparison three-year period

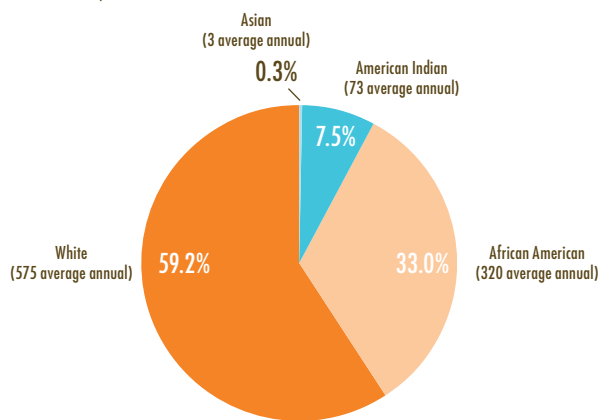
(363.3 arrests per 100,000 youth age 10–17, 1994–1996). Comparable rates improve or remain the same in most Oklahoma counties (54 of 77). Currently, the highest and worst rate of youths from the ages of 10 through 17 (995.7 arrests per 100,000 youth) arrested for violent crimes is found in Jefferson County. The lowest and best rate (0.0 arrests per 100,000 youth) is in eight Oklahoma counties (Beaver, Cimarron, Dewey, Ellis, Grant, Harper, Major and Roger Mills).

While non-White children comprise only about one-fourth (24.8%) of the child population, they account for about twice as many (40.8%) of the violent crime arrests of children under age 18 (2001–2003).

Based on the latest national information available (2003), Oklahoma ranks in the best third of the nation (19th) based on the portion of violent crimes for which a juvenile is arrested.

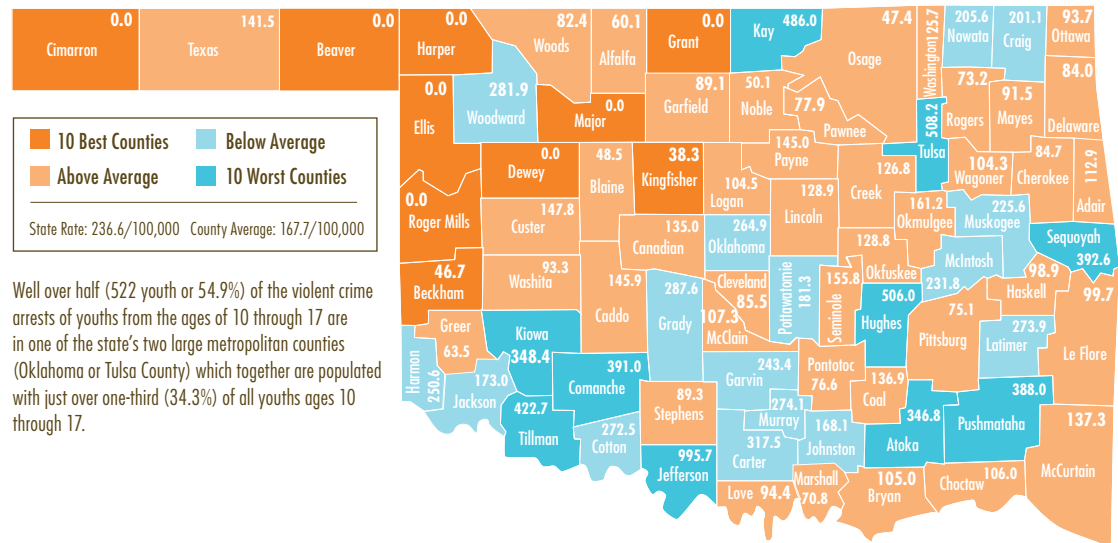
## Juvenile Violent Crime Arrests

Under Age 18, By Race  
Oklahoma, 2001–2003



Hispanic juveniles may be of any race and with an average of 74 arrests annually comprise 7.6% of all 2001–2003 Oklahoma juvenile arrests for violent crimes

## Three-Year Rate of Violent Crime Arrests Per 100,000 Youth Ages 10–17 (2001–2003)



Well over half (522 youth or 54.9%) of the violent crime arrests of youths from the ages of 10 through 17 are in one of the state's two large metropolitan counties (Oklahoma or Tulsa County) which together are populated with just over one-third (34.3%) of all youths ages 10 through 17.



# INFANT MORTALITY

Disease, poverty, abuse, neglect, injuries or infections can cause infant death. Higher rates occur in distressed communities. Reflecting the effectiveness of educational, economic, social and health care measures, the infant mortality rate is an indicator of a community's overall quality of life.

Each year just under four hundred babies born in Oklahoma (388 average annual, 2001–2003) do not live to see their first birthday. Causes vary widely. Babies die from birth complications, birth defects, health problems, living conditions, injuries, inadequate care, Sudden Infant Death Syndrome, and more.

The current (2001–2003) rate of Oklahoma infants who die this young improves slightly when compared to the three-year period just one year earlier (2000–2002). Oklahoma infant death rates drop from 7.9 to 7.7 deaths per 1,000 live births, with comparable rates improving or staying the same in the majority of Oklahoma's counties (42 of 77).

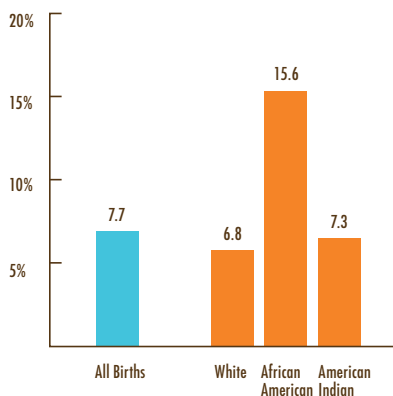
Infant death rates have declined over time. Today, proportionately fewer Oklahoma babies (7.7 per 1,000 live births, 2001–2003) die in their first year of life than did in the mid-1990's (8.4 per 1,000 live births, 1994–1996), with rates improving or staying the same in the majority of Oklahoma's counties (46 of 77). Currently, the highest and worst infant death rate (26.5 per 1,000 live births) is found in Harmon County; the lowest and best (0.0 per 1,000 live births) is found in six Oklahoma counties (Alfalfa, Beaver, Cimarron, Ellis, Grant and Johnston).

Over time, infant death rates have improved for all races. However, the most recent death rate for African American infants (15.6 per 1,000 African American births) remains well over twice as high as the comparable rates for both White and American Indian infants (6.8 per 1,000 White births and 7.3 per 1,000 American Indian births).

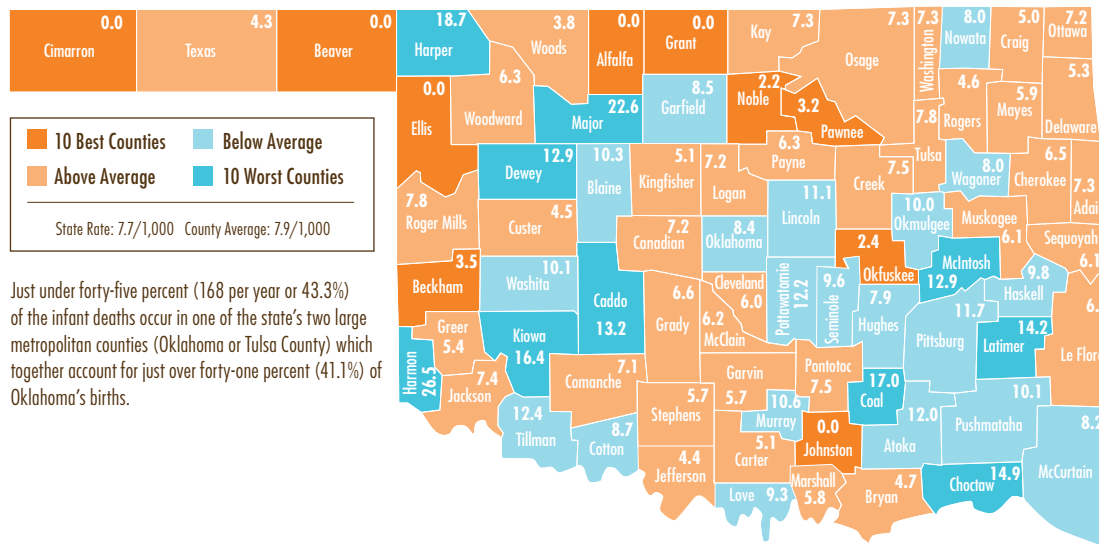
Ranking in the bottom half of all the states, Oklahoma's rate of infant death is only fair relative to other parts of the country. Oklahoma's rank among the fifty states is 38th during the most recent year (2002) in which states were compared.

## Infant Deaths

Three-year rate per 1,000 Births, by Race Oklahoma, 2001–2003



## Three-Year Rate of Infant Deaths Per 1,000 Live Births (2001–2003)



Just under forty-five percent (168 per year or 43.3%) of the infant deaths occur in one of the state's two large metropolitan counties (Oklahoma or Tulsa County) which together account for just over forty-one percent (41.1%) of Oklahoma's births.

## CHILD AND TEEN DEATH

Disturbing trends continue. The leading causes of death for children and teens are changing from natural causes, such as illness and birth defects, to preventable causes, including injury and violence. Children increasingly imitate the violence they observe on television. Poor children are three times more likely to die during their childhood than non-poor children.

More than four hundred youth die each year (421 average annual ages 1 through 19, 2001–2003). Half are children (47.5% or 200 ages 1 through 14); half are teenagers (52.5% or 221 teens ages 15 through 19).

The rate of death among Oklahoma youth from the ages of 1 through 19 worsens slightly (44.9 per 100,000, 2001–2003) when compared to the three-year period one year earlier (43.0 per 100,000, 2000–2002), with comparable rates worsening in most Oklahoma counties (51 of 77) during this time period.

Currently (2001–2003), youth in every age group die at rates lower than they did in the mid-1990's (improving

from 33.1 to 29.5 per 100,000 children ages 1 through 14; from 100.1 to 84.8 per 100,000 teens ages 15 through 19; from 51.0 to 44.9 per 100,000 youth ages 1 through 19). Over time, death rates for children ages 1 through 14 improve in less than half (38 of 77) of Oklahoma's counties. Death rates for youth of other ages stay the same or improve in the majority of Oklahoma's counties (50 of 77). Currently, the highest and worst rate of child death (126.7 per 100,000 children ages 1 through 14 in the county) is found in Roger Mills County; the lowest and best (0.0 per 100,000) is found in four Oklahoma counties (Coal, Cotton, Jefferson and Noble). The highest and worst rate of teen death (264.8 per 100,000 teens ages 15 through 19 in the county) is found in Greer County; the lowest and best (0.0 per 100,000) is found in eight Oklahoma counties (Alfalfa, Beaver, Ellis, Grant, Harper, Jefferson, Noble and Roger Mills). The highest and worst rate of youth death (120.7 per 100,000 youth ages 1 through 19 in the county) is found in Harmon County; the lowest and best (0.0 per 100,000) is found

in two Oklahoma counties (Jefferson and Noble).

Half (49.8%) of all child and teen deaths are accidental (2001–2003), with fewer deaths from diseases (35.2%) or violence (15.0%).

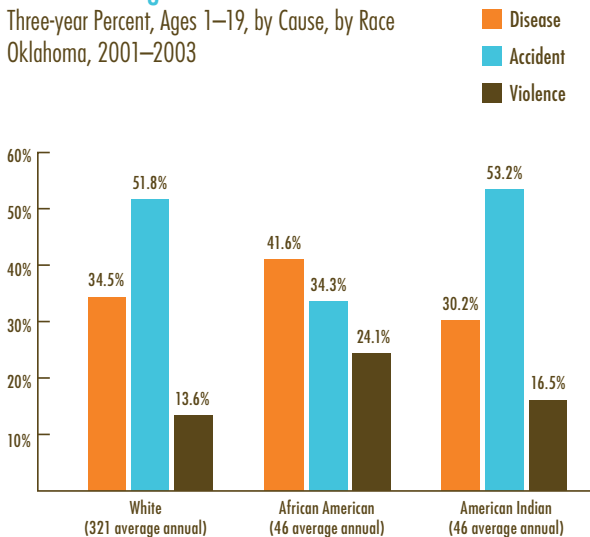
Thirty-five young Oklahomans (under the age of 20) commit suicide each year (average annual, 2001–2003). While most are older White male adolescents, young Oklahoma suicide victims are from all races, all ages and both sexes.

One in four (24.1%) of the African American children and teens who do not live to adulthood die violently. In Oklahoma, a young African American is almost twice as likely to die of violence than his or her White peer (13.6%). Accidental death rates top fifty percent for both White (51.8%) and American Indian (53.2%) children and teens.

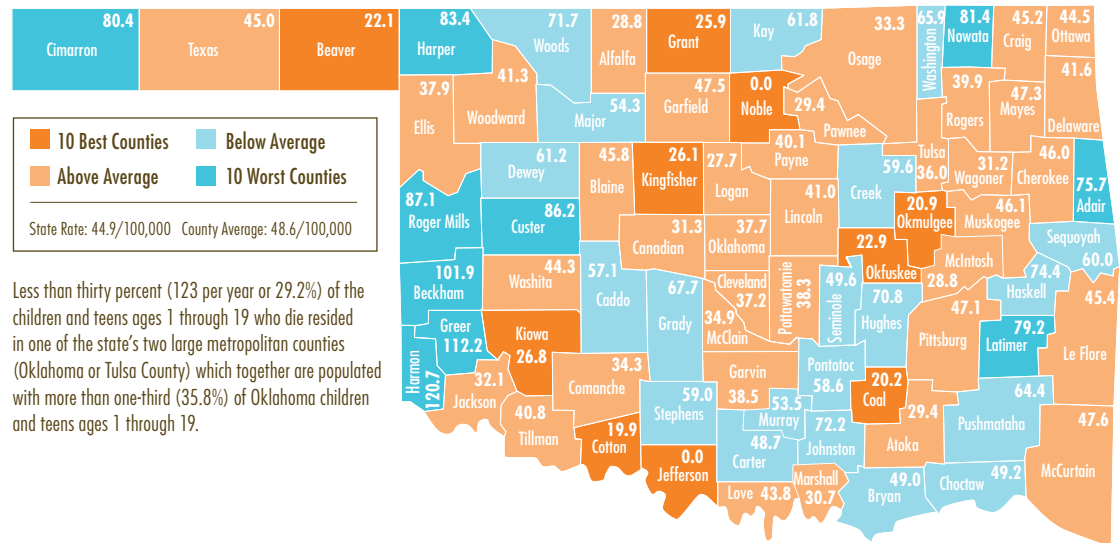
Even though improved in recent years, Oklahoma's rankings of child and teen death for the most recent year compared (2002) are in the worst half of all states (34th in child death; 37th in teen death).

### Deaths among Children and Teens

Three-year Percent, Ages 1–19, by Cause, by Race Oklahoma, 2001–2003



### Three-Year Rate of Death Per 100,000 Youth Ages 1–19 (2001–2003)



Less than thirty percent (123 per year or 29.2%) of the children and teens ages 1 through 19 who die resided in one of the state's two large metropolitan counties (Oklahoma or Tulsa County) which together are populated with more than one-third (35.8%) of Oklahoma children and teens ages 1 through 19.