



oklahoma's economic clusters & state benchmark indicators

oklahoma's economic clusters

The 2006–2007 Oklahoma KIDS COUNT Factbook again divides Oklahoma's 77 counties into five clusters with similar conditions based on four economic factors:

Child Poverty Rates (2003 US Census)—the best measure of the presence of very poor children in a community

Per Capita Personal Income (2002–2004 Average Annual)—the most current measure of income levels of people in a community

Percent of Children Receiving Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) (FY2003–FY2005 Average Annual)—the most current measure of children required to survive on inadequate resources

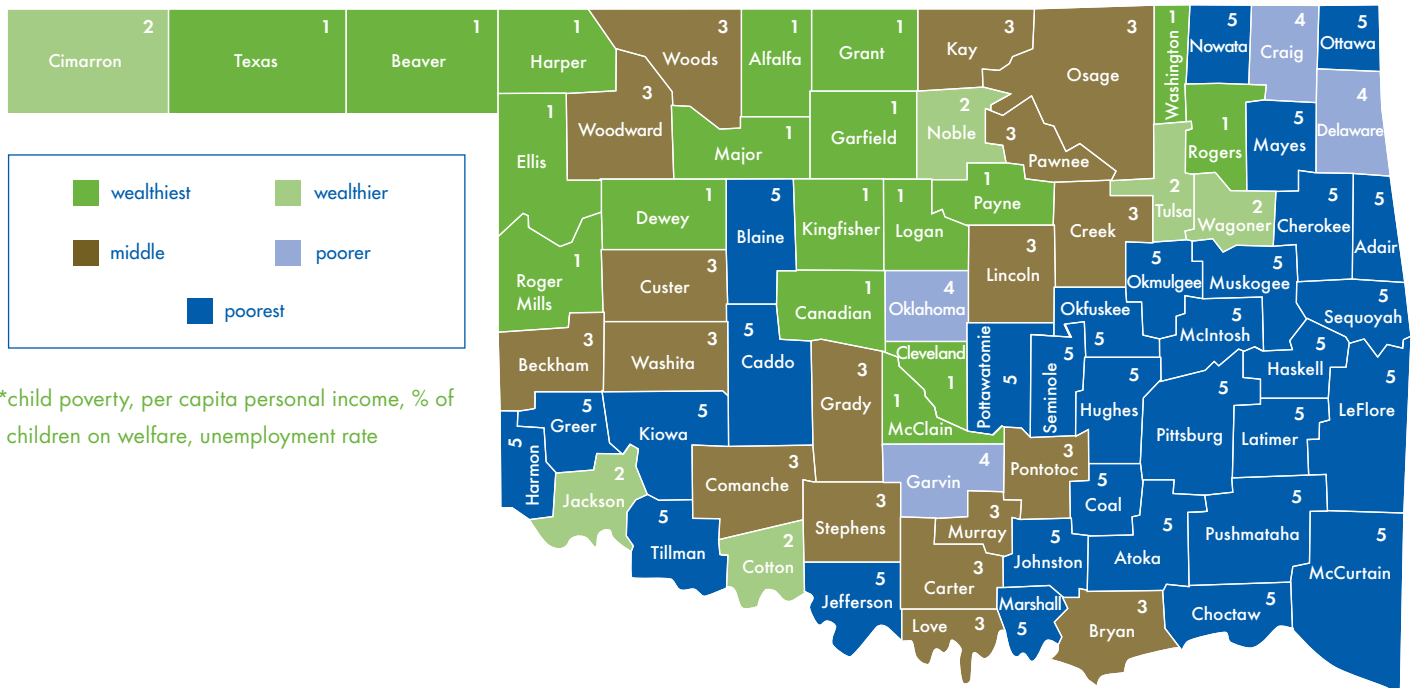
Unemployment Rates (2002–2004 Average Annual)—the best measure of people's ability to improve economic conditions through work



Taken together, these factors provide a comprehensive picture of a county's economic status in a manner which can be ranked, grouped into clusters, updated and tracked from year to year. Each county is ranked on each of the four factors. The four

individual county rankings are combined into an "Economic Index" in which the lower the number, the wealthier the county. Each county is ranked again according to its "Economic Index" and grouped into one of five economic clusters: wealthiest, wealthier,

county economic index: rankings of various economic factors*, 2002–2004 (fy2003–fy2005)



*child poverty, per capita personal income, % of children on welfare, unemployment rate



middle, poorer or poorest. Changes in local economic conditions resulted in placing several Oklahoma counties in a different cluster than in prior years. Each cluster is composed of approximately twenty percent (20%) of the state's population.

These five clusters continue to illustrate the diverse economic environments in which Oklahoma children live. Oklahoma's wealthiest counties remain primarily concentrated in the northwestern corner of the state, with a few adjacent to Oklahoma's two largest urban counties (Oklahoma and Tulsa). The poorest counties remain primarily concentrated in the southeastern corner, with

substantial numbers found in the southwest and the northeast.

Similar to past years, the profiles of the five clusters reveal clear patterns in Oklahoma's economic landscape. Twice the number of children live in poverty in Oklahoma's 31 poorest counties than do in the state's 18 wealthiest counties. Children in Oklahoma's poorest counties are twice as likely to be on welfare. Incomes are the lowest, unemployment rates are the highest, and economic distress is entrenched in these poorest, mostly rural Oklahoma counties.

The cluster of Oklahoma's 18 wealthiest counties has the best indicators for ten of

comparing profiles: oklahoma's economic clusters

	All Counties	Cluster 1 Wealthiest Counties
Total Population (2004)	3,523,553	711,174 (20.2%)
Child Population (2004)	859,870	162,072 (18.8%)
Number of Counties	77 (100.0%)	18 (23.4%)
Percent of Child Population Residing in Metropolitan Counties	64.6%	66.4%
Percent of Child Population Residing in Mid-Size Counties	14.1%	23.0%
Percent of Child Population Residing in Rural Counties	21.3%	10.6%
Number and Percent of Children Living in Poverty (2003)	181,398 (21.1%)	24,944 (15.3%)
Average of County Per Capita Incomes (2002–2004)	\$26,832	\$25,409
Average Monthly Number and Percent of Children Receiving TANF (FY2003–FY2005)	26,074 (3.0%)	2,575 (1.6%)
Average of County Unemployment Rates (2002–2004)	5.1	3.4
Average Annual Percent of Low Birthweight Babies, < 5 1/2 lbs (2002–2004)	7.9%	7.0%
Average Annual Percent of Very Low Birthweight Babies, < 3 lbs, 5 oz (2002–2004)	1.2%	1.0%
Average Annual Rate of Births to Young Teen Girls ages 15–17 (2002–2004)	29.4/1,000 young teen girls	18.3/1,000 young teen girls
Average Annual Rate of Births to Older Teens ages 18–19 (2002–2004)	94.5/1,000 older teen girls	56.0/1,000 older teen girls
Average Annual Rate of Births to Teens ages 15–19 (2002–2004)	56.3/1,000 teen girls	35.7/1,000 teen girls
Average Annual Rate of Child Abuse/Neglect Confirmations (FY2003–FY2005)	14.7/1,000 children	12.1/1,000 children
Average Annual High School Dropout Rate (SY2002/2003–2004/2005)	3.5%	2.8%
Average Annual Violent Crime Arrest Rate of Youth ages 10–17 (2002–2004)	218.3/100,000 youth	100.2/100,000 youth
Average Annual Rate of Infant Mortality (2002–2004)	7.9/1,000 births	6.9/1,000 births
Average Annual Death Rate among Children ages 1–14 (2001–2003)	26.2/100,000 children	23.3/100,000 children
Average Annual Death Rate among Teens ages 15–19 (2001–2003)	81.0/100,000 teens	66.0/100,000 teens
Average Annual Death Rate among Children & Teens ages 1–19 (2001–2003)	41.4/100,000 youth	36.4/100,000 youth
Average of County ACE (Adverse Childhood Experience) Indexes	34.7	23.0

the twelve benchmark areas investigated by Oklahoma KIDS COUNT: infants born under three pounds, five ounces, infants born under five and one-half pounds, births to young teens, births to older teens, births to all teens, high school dropouts, juvenile violent crime arrests, infant mortality, teen death rates and death rates for children & teens. Oklahoma's 18 wealthiest counties also have the second best rates for the remaining two indicators: child abuse & neglect confirmations and child death rates. These 18 wealthiest Oklahoma counties also have the best ACE Index, measuring adverse childhood experience in those counties.

With a rate more than twice as high as most other clusters, the second most economically advantaged cluster (wealthier counties) has the worst rate of juvenile violent crime arrests.

The cluster of Oklahoma's 31 poorest counties has the worst indicators for four of the twelve benchmark areas investigated by Oklahoma KIDS COUNT: child abuse & neglect confirmations, child death rates, teen death rates, and death rates for children & teens. This cluster of poorest counties also ties with one other cluster for having the worst infant mortality rates in Oklahoma. Oklahoma's cluster of 31 poorest counties



also has the second worst rates of births to young teens, births to older teens and births to all teens; and scores the very worst on Oklahoma's ACE Index, measuring adverse childhood experience in those counties.

Cluster 2 Wealthier Counties	Cluster 3 Middle Counties	Cluster 4 Poorer Counties	Cluster 5 Poorest Counties
680,028 (19.3%)	636,411 (18.1%)	762,005 (21.6%)	733,935 (20.8%)
174,273 (20.3%)	155,802 (18.1%)	189,758 (22.1%)	177,965 (20.7%)
6 (7.8%)	18 (23.4%)	4 (5.2%)	31 (40.3%)
92.8%	52.9%	90.2%	18.3%
4.4%	21.2%	0.0%	24.1%
2.8%	26.0%	9.8%	57.5%
32,104 (18.4%)	33,633 (21.6%)	43,210 (22.8%)	47,499 (26.9%)
\$24,944	\$22,542	\$25,097	\$20,122
4,071 (2.3%)	3,293 (2.1%)	10,486 (5.5%)	5,649 (3.1%)
4.2	4.9	4.7	6.3
8.0%	8.2%	8.6%	7.5%
1.3%	1.2%	1.4%	1.2%
30.5/1,000 young teen girls	27.5/1,000 young teen girls	37.4/1,000 young teen girls	33.1/1,000 young teen girls
97.8/1,000 older teen girls	105.6/1,000 older teen girls	111.5/1,000 older teen girls	111.2/1,000 older teen girls
56.9/1,000 teen girls	58.5/1,000 teen girls	67.5/1,000 teen girls	64.5/1,000 teen girls
8.8/1,000 children	15.4/1,000 children	18.3/1,000 children	18.4/1,000 children
4.1%	3.3%	4.1%	3.1%
393.4/100,000 youth	196.3/100,000 youth	229.1/100,000 youth	176.7/100,000 youth
7.6/1,000 births	7.0/1,000 births	8.8/1,000 births	8.8/1,000 births
20.8/100,000 children	29.3/100,000 children	23.9/100,000 children	33.9/100,000 children
82.9/100,000 teens	87.6/100,000 teens	79.0/100,000 teens	90.5/100,000 teens
36.5 / 100,000 youth	45.9 / 100,000 youth	38.0 / 100,000 youth	50.0 / 100,000 youth
25.6	35.1	41.5	42.0

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 more than four thousand Oklahoma babies (4,011 average annual, 2002–2004) 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 (634 average annual, 2002–2004) is born very, very tiny (weighing less than 3 pounds, 5 ounces).

The proportion of Oklahoma babies born too small remains unimproved (7.9% of all births, 2002–2004) when compared to the

three year period just one year earlier (7.9% of all births, 2001–2003). Comparable rates stay the same or worsen in a majority (40 of 77) Oklahoma counties.

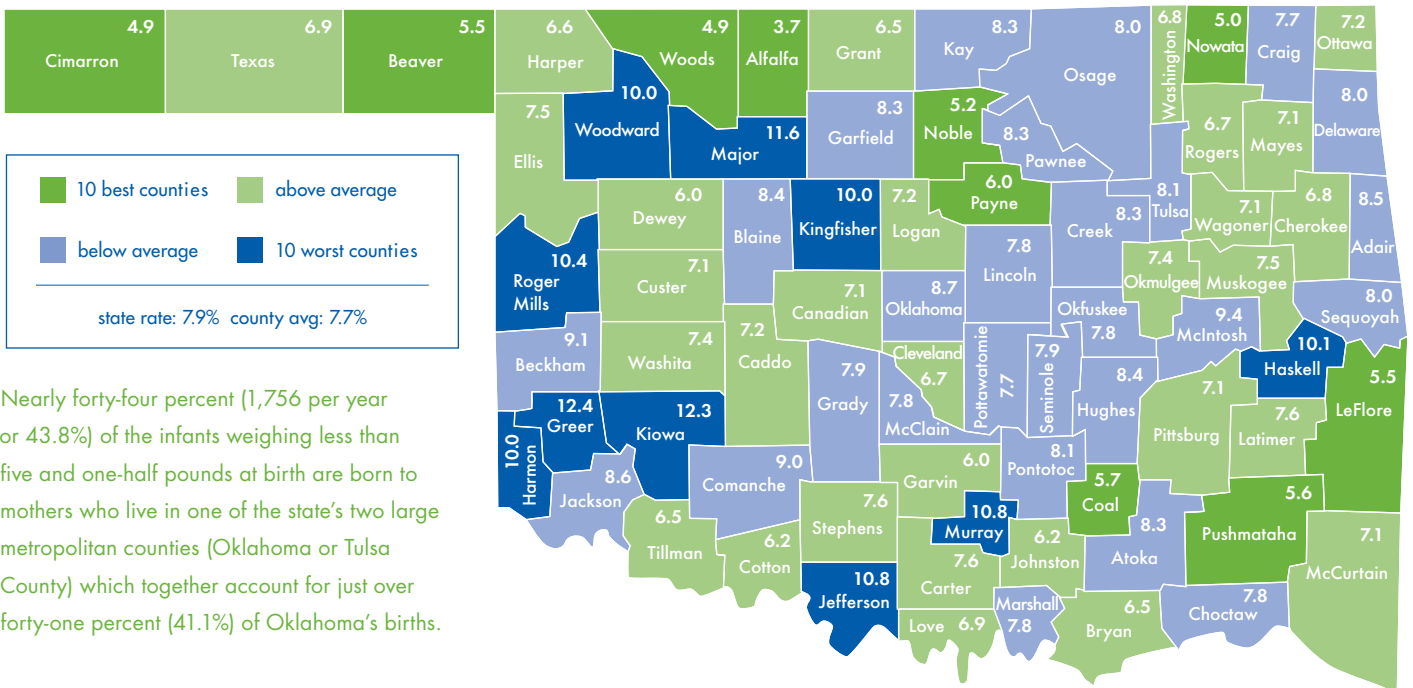
The trend of babies born too small has continued for years. A higher proportion of Oklahoma babies (7.9% of all births) are born too small (weighing less than 5 ½ pounds) today as compared to those born in the mid-1990s (7.1% of all births), with such rates worsening in a majority of Oklahoma’s counties (57 of 77). Currently, the highest and worst low birthweight rate (12.4% of all births to mothers living in the county) is found in Greer County; the lowest and best (3.7% of all births to mothers living in the county) is in Alfalfa County.

The current rate (1.2% of all births, 2002–2004) of births for Oklahoma’s smallest infants (weighing less than 3 pounds, 5 ounces) remains unimproved as compared to the mid-1990s (1.2% of all

births). Comparable rates stay the same or worsen in a majority of (47 of 77) Oklahoma counties. Currently, the highest and worst very low birthweight rate (3.6% of all births to mothers living in the county) is found in Harmon County; the lowest and best (0.0% of all births to mothers living in the county) is in four Oklahoma counties (Alfalfa, Cimarron, Ellis and Jefferson).

The rate of African American babies born too small (13.5% under 5 ½ pounds; 2.5% under 3 pounds, 5 ounces) is double the rate for White infants (7.5% under 5 ½ pounds; 1.1% under 3 pounds, 5 ounces). By race, the best low birthweight rate is recorded for American Indian infants (6.5% under 5 ½ pounds) and the best very low birthweight rate is for Asians and Pacific Islanders (0.8% under 3 pounds, 5 ounces). Low birthweight rates for Hispanic mothers, who may be of any race, are equally good (6.5% under 5 ½ pounds; 0.9% under 3 pounds, 5 ounces).

three-year percent of infants born weighing less than 5½ pounds (2002–2004)



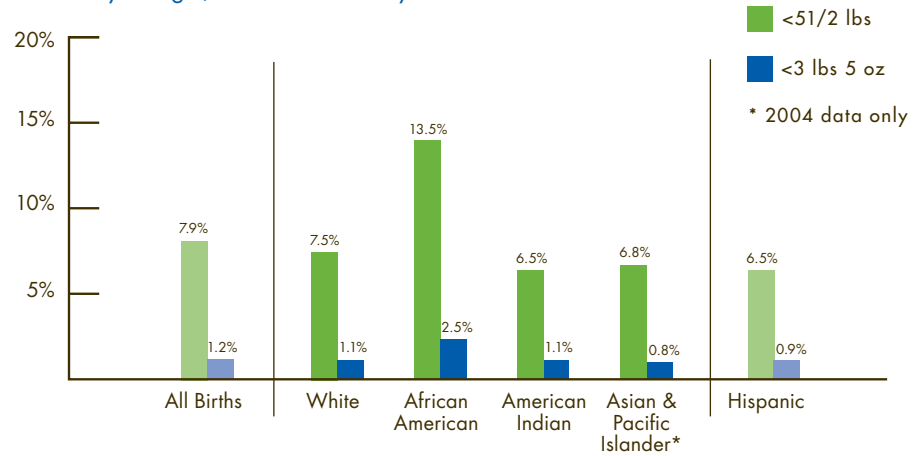
Nearly forty-four percent (1,756 per year or 43.8%) of the infants weighing less than five and one-half pounds at birth are born to mothers who live in one of the state’s two large metropolitan counties (Oklahoma or Tulsa County) which together account for just over forty-one percent (41.1%) of Oklahoma’s births.

While early prenatal care is known to improve these rates, well over one-third (37.8%, 2002–2004) 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 21st among the fifty states during the most recent year (2003) compared.

low birthweight infants, oklahoma, 2002–2004

Percent by Weight, Race and Ethnicity



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.

Almost seventy-two hundred (7,177 average annual, 2002–2004) babies are born annually to Oklahoma women under the age of twenty. Each year almost five thousand (4,882) of those babies are born to teen mothers ages 18 and 19. Over twenty-two hundred (2,249 average annual, 2002–2004) Oklahoma school-age girls (age 17 and under) have babies. Over one hundred (101 average annual, 2002–2004) of those school age girls is age fourteen

or younger. For the latest year recorded (2004), three of Oklahoma’s new mothers were age twelve or younger.

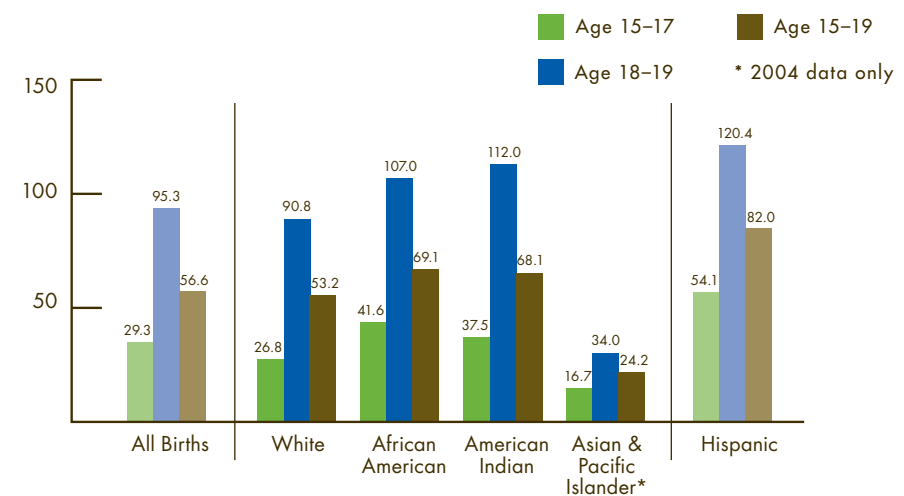
The rate of births to Oklahoma teens continues to decline (29.4 births per 1,000 girls ages 15 through 17; 94.5 births per 1,000 girls ages 18 and 19; 2002–2004) when compared to the three-year period one year earlier (29.8 births per 1,000 girls ages 15 through 17; 96.2 births per 1,000 girls ages 18 and 19; 2001–2003). During this recent year birth rates for both age groups show some improvement in a

majority of Oklahoma’s counties (43 of 77 for girls ages 15 through 17; 50 of 77 for older teens ages 18 and 19).

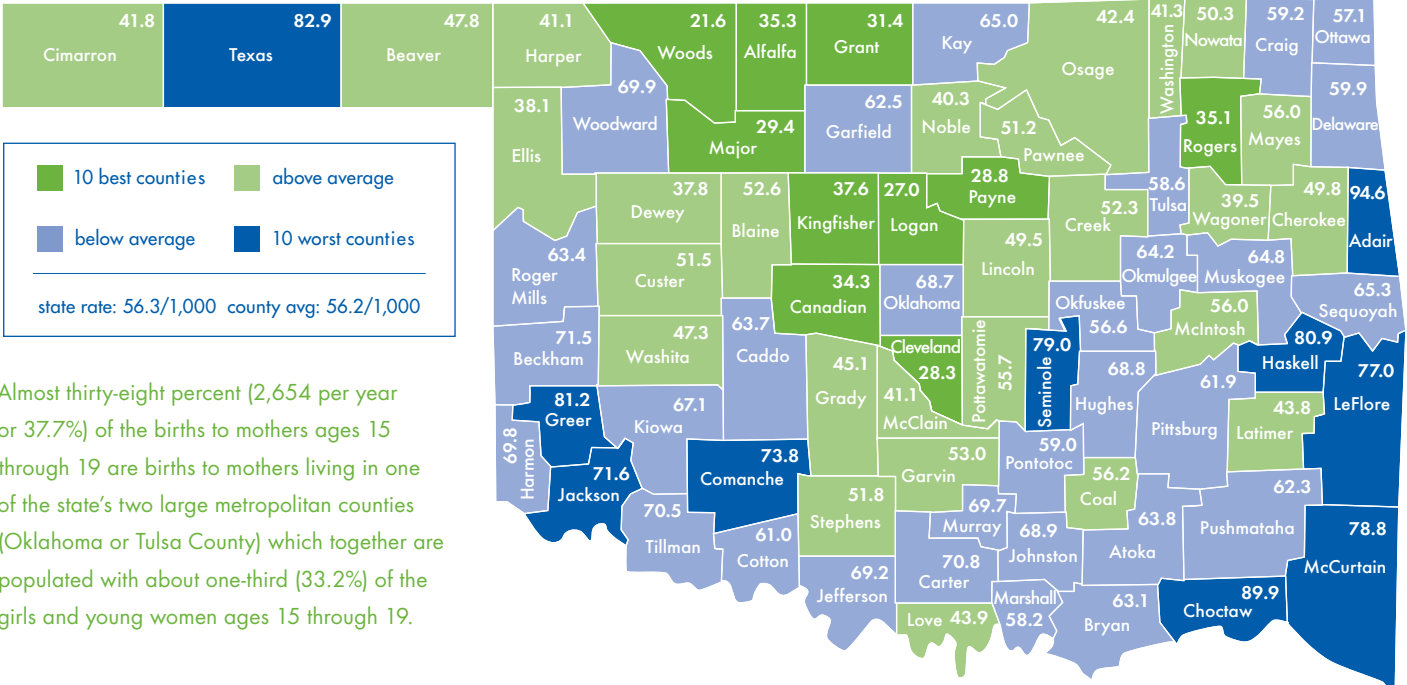
The progress made in decreasing the high Oklahoma birth rate to young teens of the mid-1990s (from 38.1 to 29.4 births per 1,000 girls ages 15 through 17; from 103.1 to 94.5 births per 1,000 teens ages 18 and 19) is also evident at the county level where rates for both ages improve in most Oklahoma counties (54 of 77 for girls ages 15 through 17; 49 of 77 for older teens ages 18 and 19). Currently, the highest and

births to teens, oklahoma, 2002–2004

Age 15–17; 18–19; 15–19; Rate per 1000 Teens in Age Group, by Race & Ethnicity



three-year rate of births per 1,000 female teens (2002–2004)



Almost thirty-eight percent (2,654 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 (33.2%) of the girls and young women ages 15 through 19.

worst rate for girls ages 15 through 17 (53.7 births per 1,000) is found in Texas County; the lowest and best (8.8 births per 1,000) is in Major County. The highest and worst rate for older teens ages 18 and 19 (167.7 births per 1,000) is found in Adair County; the lowest and best (30.2 births per 1,000) is in Payne County.



The rate of teen birth among African Americans (41.6 per 1,000 young teens age 15 through 17; 107.0 per 1,000 older teens age 18 and 19) and American Indians (37.5 per 1,000 young teens age 15 through 17; 112.0 per 1,000 older teens age 18 and 19) is substantially higher than for White teens (26.8 per 1,000 young teens age 15 through 17; 90.8 per 1,000 older teens age 18 and 19). The young teen birth rate (54.1 per 1,000) for Hispanic youth, who may be of any race, is double that for White youth (26.8 per 1,000).

Oklahoma's teen childbearing rate was substantially above other states in 1980, but by the late 1990s, 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 (2003) compared.

child abuse & 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 (49,559 average annual, FY 2003–FY 2005) incidents each year which contain allegations of serious or immediate threats to a child's safety. On average,

OKDHS substantiates that nearly thirteen thousand (12,882) of those incidents are abuse and/or neglect.

Recent (FY 2003–FY 2005) rates of confirmed child abuse and/or neglect in Oklahoma drop very slightly when compared to the three-year period just one year earlier (FY 2001–FY 2003). Oklahoma abuse and neglect rates move from 14.8 to 14.7 confirmations per 1,000 children in the state, however, comparable rates worsened in a majority of Oklahoma counties (45 of 77).

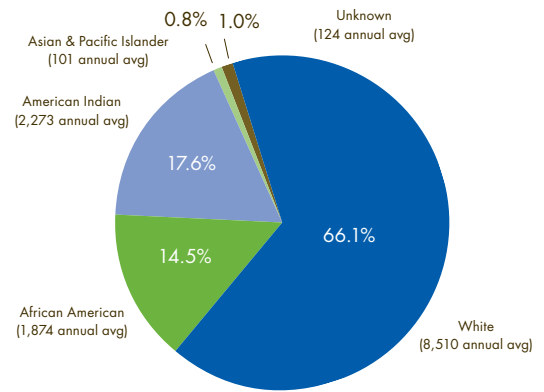
Fortunately, the record high rate of child abuse and/or neglect posted in Oklahoma during the late 1990s (17.8 confirmations per 1,000 children, FY 1998–FY 2000) has declined substantially. Unfortunately, today's rates (14.7 confirmations per 1,000 children) still remain above those recorded before the rates peaked in the late 1990s (14.3 confirmations per 1,000 children, FY 1995–FY 1997). Rates worsen in a majority of (45 of 77) Oklahoma counties from

those of the mid-1990s. Currently, the highest and worst proportion of children confirmed to be victims of child abuse and/or neglect (50.7 per 1,000) is found in Coal County; the lowest and best (2.6 per 1,000) is in Cimarron County.

Deaths resulting from child abuse fell from the all time high of 51 recorded last year (FY 2004) to 40 this year (FY 2005). Among this year's deaths are 20 girls and 20 boys of all races, most very young. At their death, fourteen (35.0%) were less than one year of age, sixteen (40.0%) were toddlers (ages one and two), and seven (17.5%) were barely old enough to attend preschool or kindergarten (ages three through six). The dead included three (7.5%) school age youth (ages seven and older). Almost three-quarters (72.5%) of the deaths were a result of neglect.

Two-thirds (66.1%) of confirmations of abuse and/or neglect in Oklahoma involve children who are White. However, while non-White children comprise only

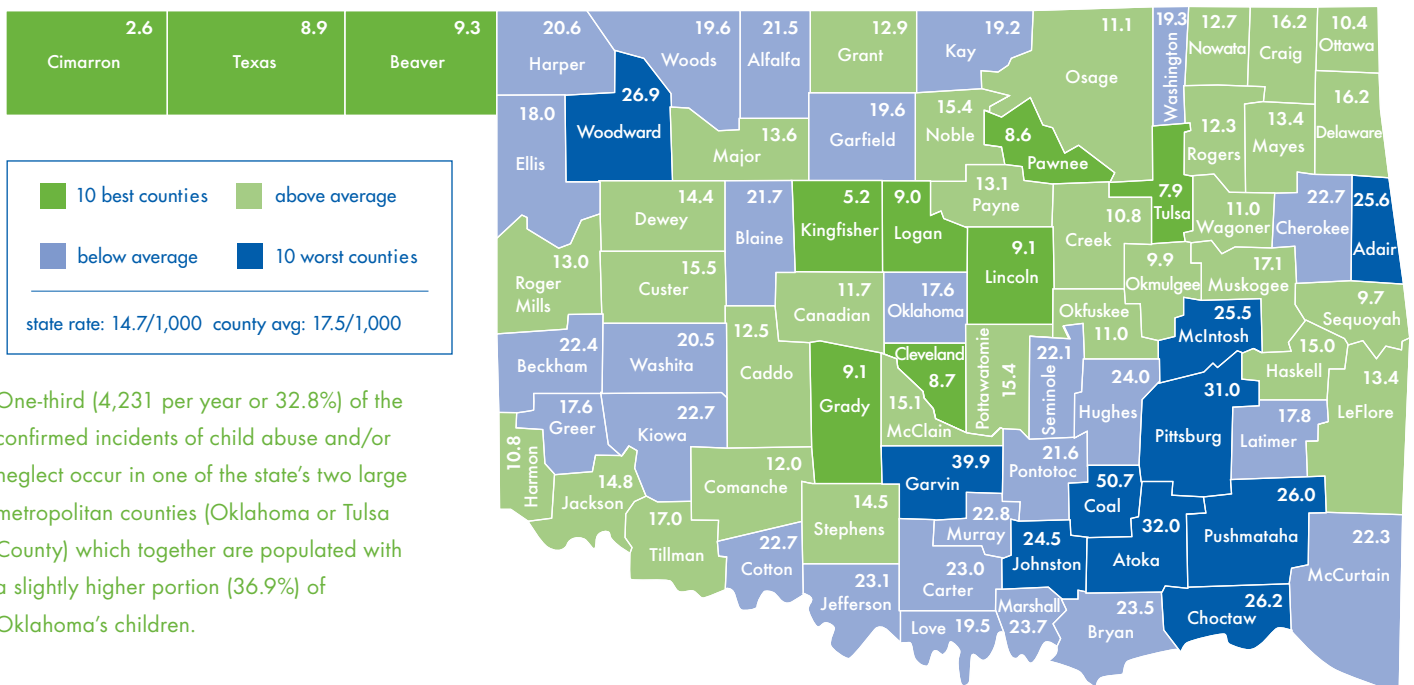
child abuse & neglect confirmations, oklahoma, fy2003–fy2005 by Race of Child



one-fourth (24.5%, 2003) of the child population, they account for one-third (32.9%, excluding those whose race is not known) of the confirmed child abuse and/or neglect incidents.

During the most recent year (FY 2004) for which comparison data is available, Oklahoma ranks in the bottom half of all states (35th) in the rate of children who are victims of abuse and/or neglect.

three-year rate of confirmations per 1,000 children (fy2003–fy2005)



One-third (4,231 per year or 32.8%) 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 a slightly higher portion (36.9%) of Oklahoma's children.

high school dropouts

Lack of education threatens current and future generations of 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 as 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 seventy-five hundred (7,388 average annual, School Year 2002/2003 through School Year 2004/2005) young Oklahomans quit school without graduating each year. About six thousand (6,036) of those are under age 19 and quit 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, others move into the district, leaving dropouts comprising the large majority of Oklahoma students lost over this four-year period. The four-year high school dropout rate for Oklahoma is estimated to be 14.5% for the class of 2005.

Oklahoma's single year high school dropout rate averages 3.5% during the most recent three-year period (School Year 2002/2003 through School Year 2004/2005). Currently, the highest and worst rate of children leaving high school each year without graduating (5.3%) is found in Kay County; the lowest and best (0.5%) is in Alfalfa County.

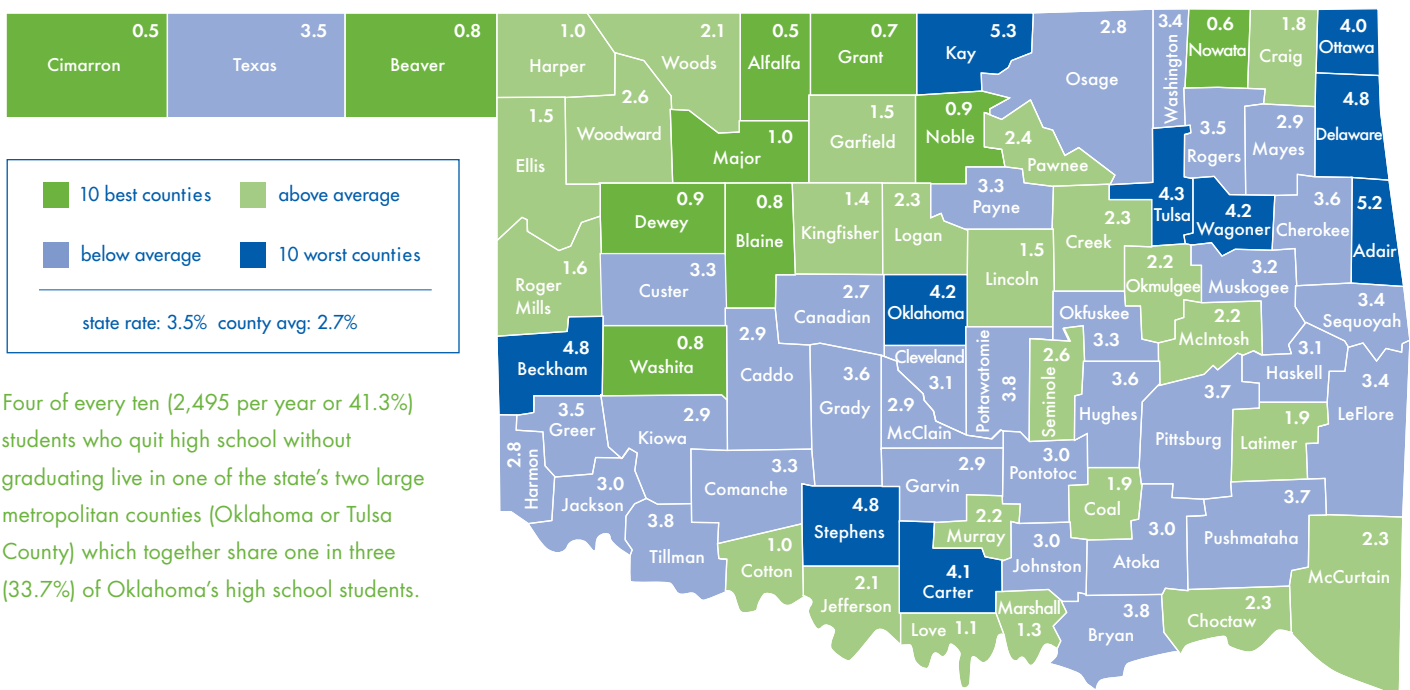
Recent (School Year 2002/2003 through School Year 2004/2005) high school dropout rates in Oklahoma fall slightly when compared to the three-year period just one year earlier (School Year 2001/2002 through School Year 2003/2004). High school

dropout rates move from 3.7% to 3.5% in the state, with comparable rates during the same period also improving in majority of Oklahoma counties (45 of 77).

The proportion of high school dropouts who are girls (45.9%) and the proportion who are boys (54.1%) changes little from year to year (School Year 2002/2003 through School Year 2004/2005). Seventeen remains the most common age an Oklahoma dropout leaves high school. Compared to any other grade, the largest proportion (24.1%, School Year 2002/2003 through School Year 2004/2005) of students leave school during the tenth grade. Increases in the rate (23.8%, School Year 2002/2003 through School Year 2004/2005) of students currently leaving school earlier continue to position ninth graders at a very close second.

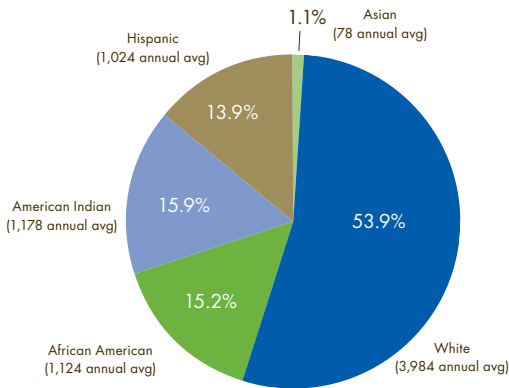
During the most recent three-year period (School Year 2002/2003 through School Year 2004/2005) more than half (3,984 per year or 53.9%) of all children failing to finish high

three-year rate of youth under age 19 dropping out of high school (sy2002/2003–sy2004/2005)



Four of every ten (2,495 per year or 41.3%) students 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 in three (33.7%) of Oklahoma's high school students.

students quitting school without graduating, oklahoma sy2002/2003–sy2004/2005 All Ages, by Race



school are White. However, while African American children comprise just under eleven percent (10.9%) of the child population, they account for a much higher proportion (15.2%) of the high school dropouts. Similarly, American Indian children make up just under twelve percent (11.9%) of Oklahoma’s child population and almost sixteen percent (15.9%) of Oklahoma’s dropouts.

During the most recent year for which comparison data is available (2004), Oklahoma betters most other states by ranking near the top (13th) in the percent of

teens who are high school dropouts (6.0% of those ages 16 through 19).



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-four thousand (23,880 in 2004) criminal arrests involve juveniles. Oklahoma children and youth account for one of every seven arrests (14.5% of arrests for any crime).

Just under nine hundred (867 average annual, 2002–2004) Oklahoma youths from the ages of 10 through 17 are

arrested each year for committing a violent crime. On average, thirteen are arrested for murder, two for manslaughter, 51 for forcible rape, 128 for robbery and 673 for aggravated assault. Four of every five (79.6%, 2002–2004) youths arrested for violent crimes in Oklahoma are male.

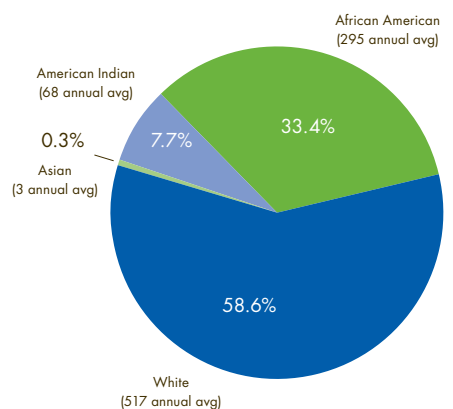
The recent (2002–2004) proportion of Oklahoma youths from the ages of 10 through 17 arrested for violent crimes decreases when compared to the three-year period just one year earlier (2001–2003). Oklahoma violent crime arrest rates for this age group move from 236.6 to 218.3 per 100,000 youth, with comparable rates staying the same or improving in the majority of Oklahoma’s counties (43 of 77).

The proportion of Oklahoma youths arrested for violent crimes continues to improve from the record highs recorded during the 1990s. The most recent juvenile violent crime arrest rate (218.3 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 (56 of 77). Currently, the highest and worst rate of youths from the ages of 10 through 17 (1,338.4 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 ten Oklahoma counties (Beaver, Cimarron, Dewey, Ellis, Grant, Harper, Major, Okfuskee, Roger Mills and Woods).

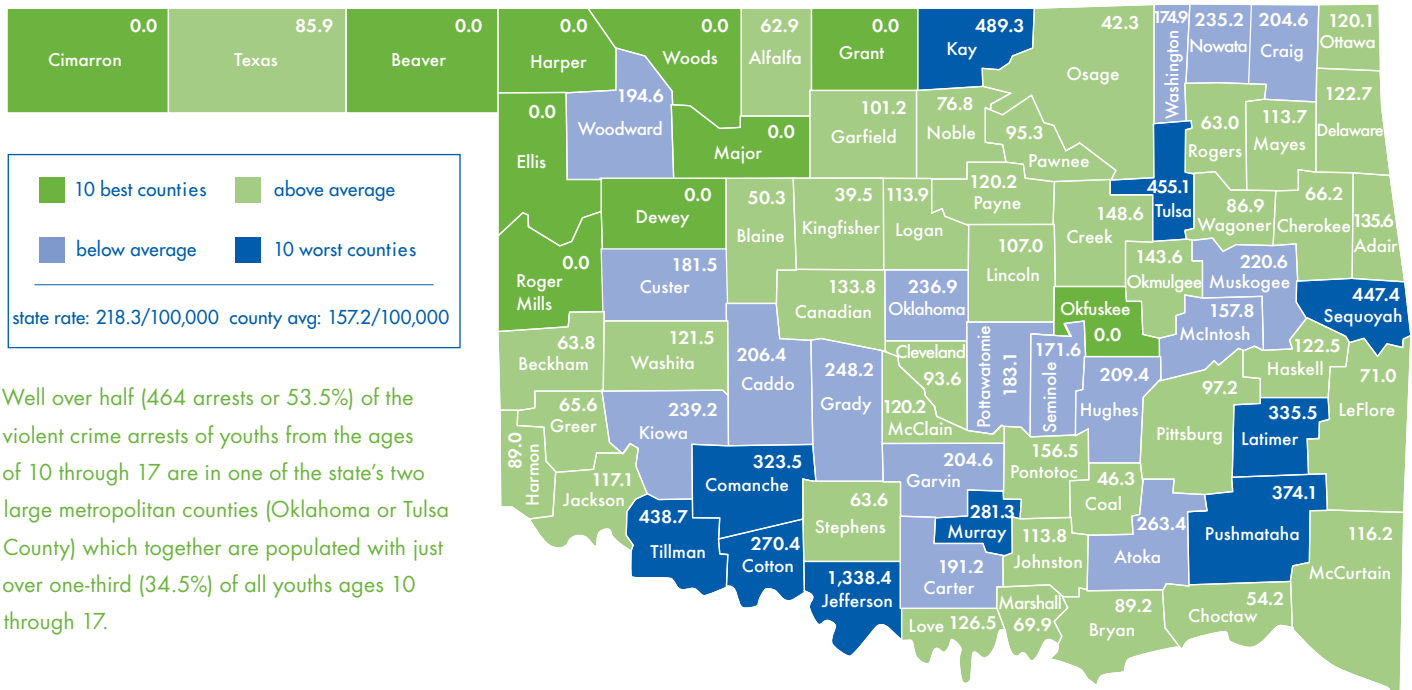
juvenile violent crime arrests, oklahoma. 2002–2004

Under Age 18, by Race & Ethnicity



Hispanic juveniles may be of any race and with an average of 62 arrests annually comprise 7.0% of all 2002–2004 Oklahoma juvenile arrests for violent crimes.

three-year rate of violent crime arrests per 100,000 youth ages 10–17 (2002–2004)



Well over half (464 arrests or 53.5%) 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 (34.5%) of all youths ages 10 through 17.

While non-White children comprise only one-fourth (24.5%, 2003) of the child population, they account for a substantially higher proportion (41.4%) of the violent

crime arrests of children under age 18 (2002–2004).

Based on the latest national information available (2004), Oklahoma ranks near the

middle of all states (28th) based on the rate of violent crimes for which a juvenile is arrested.

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 over four hundred babies born in Oklahoma (402 average annual, 2002–2004) 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.

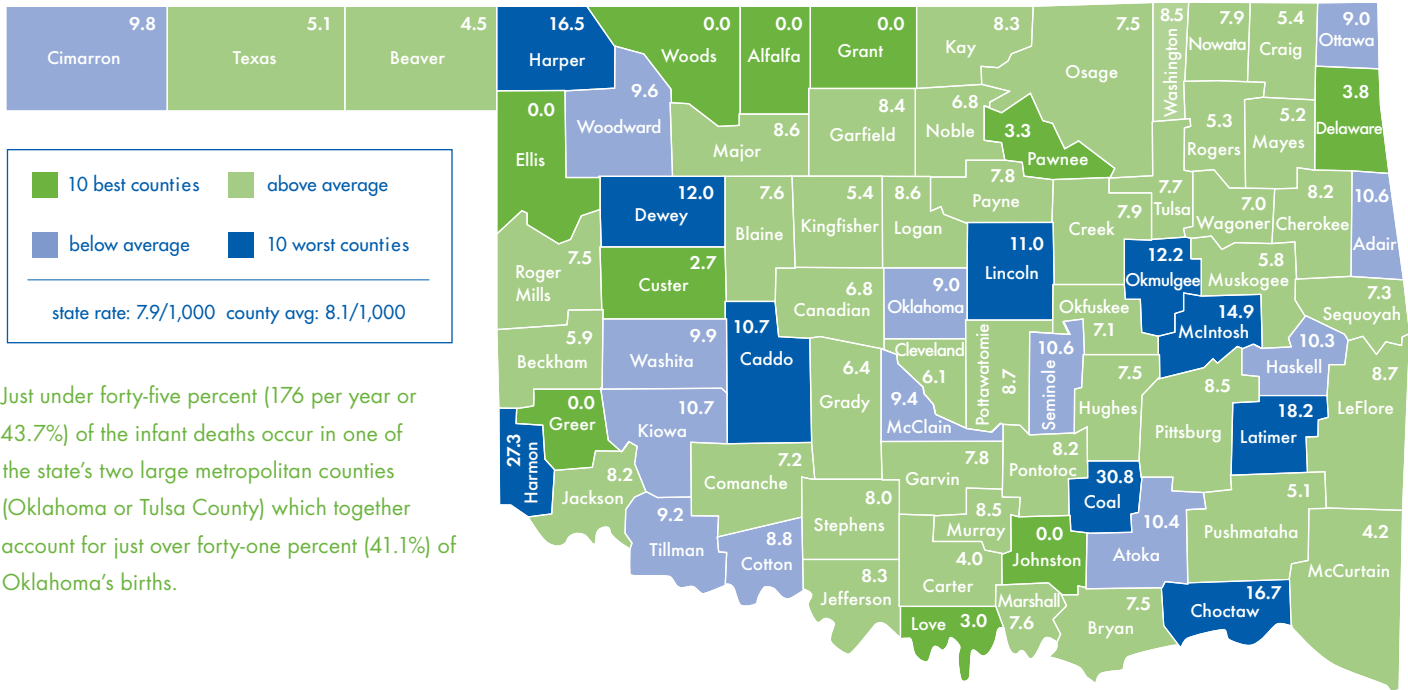
Reversing the recent annual improvement in this indicator, the current (2002–2004) rate of Oklahoma infants who die this young worsens when compared to the three-year period just one year earlier (2001–2003). Oklahoma infant death rates increased from 7.7 to 7.9 deaths per 1,000 live births, with comparable rates also worsening in a majority of Oklahoma counties (42 of 77).

Over time, however, infant death rates decline. Today, proportionately fewer Oklahoma babies (7.9 per 1,000 live births, 2002–2004) die in their first year of life than did in the mid-1990s (8.4 per 1,000 live births, 1994–1996), with rates improving or staying the same in the

majority of Oklahoma's counties (43 of 77). Currently, the highest and worst infant death rate (30.8 per 1,000 live births) is found in Coal County; the lowest and best (0.0 per 1,000 live births) is found in six Oklahoma counties (Alfalfa, Ellis, Grant, Greer, Johnston and Woods).

Infant death rates improve over time for all races. However, the most recent death rate for African American infants (16.2 per 1,000 African American births, 2002–2004) remains well over twice as high as the comparable rates for both White and American Indian infants (7.0 per 1,000 White births and 7.6 per 1,000 American Indian births). The lowest infant death rate is found among Asian and Pacific

three-year rate of death per 1,000 live births (2002–2004)



Just under forty-five percent (176 per year or 43.7%) 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.

Islander infants (2.6 per 1,000 Asian and Pacific Islander births, 2004).

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 (2003) in which states were compared.

child & 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.

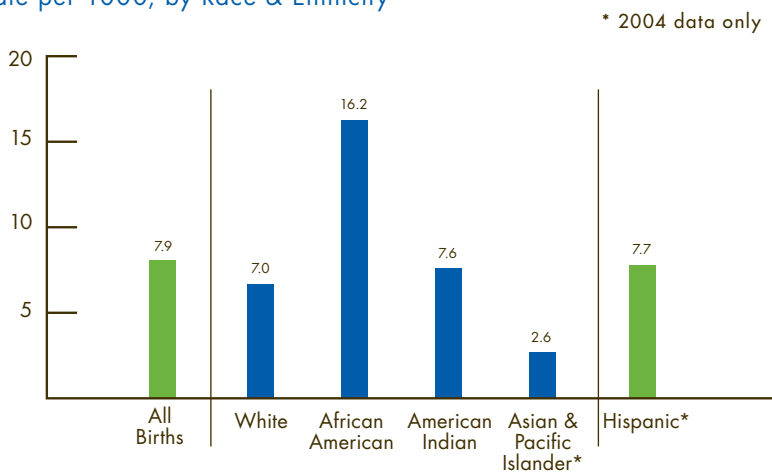
Almost four hundred children and youth die each year (384 average annual ages 1 through 19, 2002–2004). Just under half are children (45.8% or 176 ages 1 through 14); half are teenagers (54.2% or 208 teens ages 15 through 19).

The rate of death among Oklahoma youth from the ages of 1 through 19 improves (41.4 per 100,000, 2002–2004) when compared to the three-year period one year earlier (44.9 per 100,000, 2001–2003). However, comparable youth death rates worsen in most Oklahoma counties (42 of 77) during this same time period.

Currently (2002–2004), youth in every age group die at rates lower than they did in the mid-1990s (improving from 33.1 to 26.2 per 100,000 children ages 1 through 14; from 100.1 to 81.0 per 100,000 teens

infant deaths, oklahoma, 2002–2004

Rate per 1000, by Race & Ethnicity



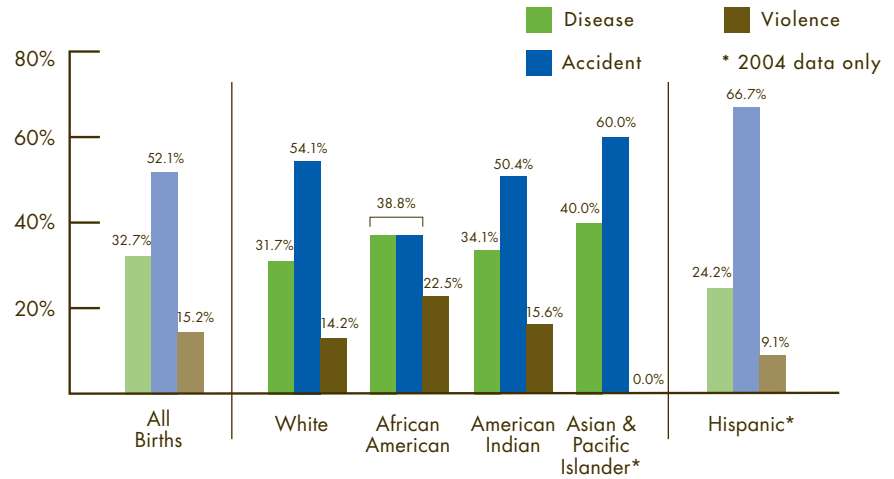
ages 15 through 19; from 51.0 to 41.4 per 100,000 youth ages 1 through 19). Over this time period, death rates for children ages 1 through 14 improve in just over half (40 of 77) of Oklahoma's counties. Death rates for teens stay the same or improve in the same majority of Oklahoma's counties (40 of 77 for teens ages 15 through 19). Currently, the highest and worst rate of child and teen death (126.1 per 100,000 children and teens ages 1 through 19 in the county) is found in Dewey County; the lowest and best (0.0 per 100,000) is found in Noble County.

Half (52.1%) of all current (2002–2004) child and teen deaths are accidental, with fewer deaths from diseases (32.7%) or violence (15.2%).

Thirty-six young Oklahomans (under the age of 20) commit suicide each year (average annual, 2002–2004). While most are older White male adolescents, young Oklahoma suicide victims are from all races, all ages and both sexes.

deaths among children & teens, oklahoma, 2002–2004

Percent, Ages 1–19; by Cause, by Race & Ethnicity



Almost one in four (22.5%, 2002–2004) of the African American children and teens who do not live to adulthood die violently.

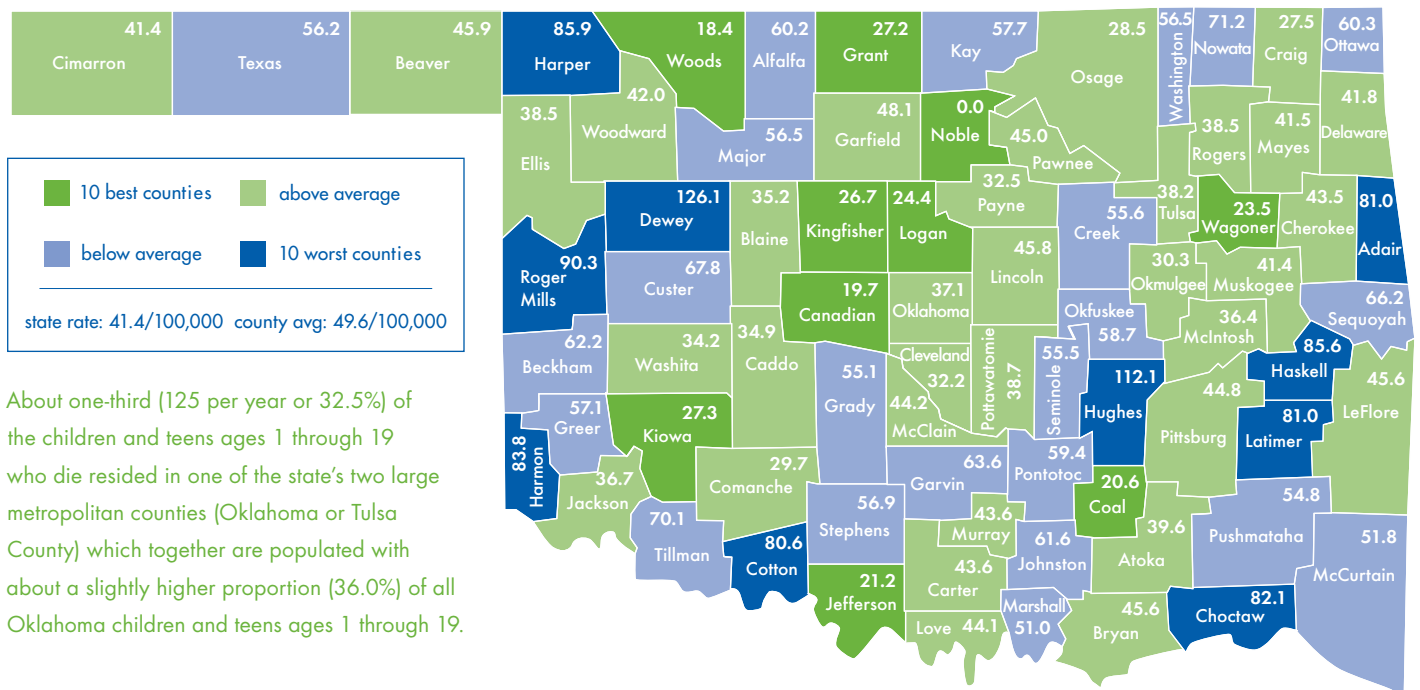
In Oklahoma, a young African American is significantly more likely to die of violence than his or her White peer (14.2%).

Accidental death rates top fifty percent for White (54.1%), American Indian (50.4%) and Asian/Pacific Islander (60.0%) children

and teens. Regardless of their race, two-thirds (66.7%) of the Hispanic children and teens who do not live to adulthood, die as a result of accidents.

Even with the improvement in death rates in recent years, Oklahoma's rankings relative to other states for the most recent year compared (2003) remain near the bottom (45th in child death; 35th in teen death).

three-year rate of death per 100,000 children ages 1–19 (2002–2004)



About one-third (125 per year or 32.5%) 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 about a slightly higher proportion (36.0%) of all Oklahoma children and teens ages 1 through 19.