

About nine Oklahoma children die every week. More than fifty (50.8) of every 100,000 Oklahoma children and youth from the ages of 1 through 19 or just under five hundred (468) children, die each year.

Just under half (48.7% or 228) of these annual child deaths are from the ages of 1 through 14; the remainder are teenagers (ages 15 through 19).

Even though the rate of death among Oklahoma children from the ages of 1 through 14 worsened slightly (from 33.0 to 33.2 per 100,000) this past year, rates stayed the same or improved in most (50 of 77) of Oklahoma's counties during the same period.

Currently proportionately fewer (33.2 per 100,000) children from the ages of 1 through 14 die than died in the early 1980s (45.1 per 100,000), with such rates also improving in the majority (52 of 77) of Oklahoma's counties during the same period.

The worst rate of death for children from the ages of 1 through 14 (89.6 per 100,000) is found in Cotton County; the best (0.0 per 100,000) is in two Oklahoma counties (Dewey and Greer).

Overall, Oklahoma children and teens are more likely to die of accidents (49.0%) than to die of diseases (31.0%) or violence (20.0%).

Violence among teens from the ages of 15 through 19 is common with more than one-fourth (27.8%) of all teen deaths resulting from violence. An African American teen is nearly three times as likely to die of violence (61.3% of all African American teen deaths) in Oklahoma than his or her White peers (23.4% of all White teen deaths).

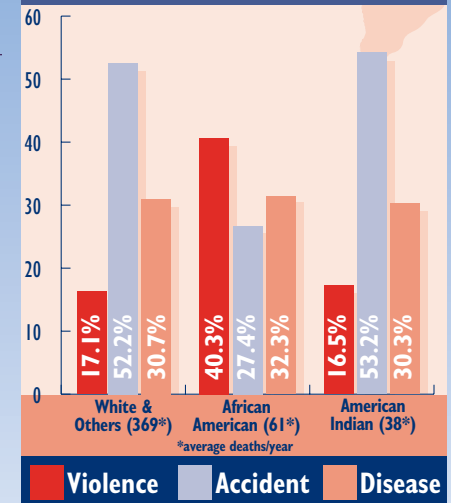
An average of 38 Oklahomans under age 20 commit suicide each year, most of whom are older White adolescents.

Even with the improvement in death rates since the 1980s, Oklahoma's ranking relative to other states for the most recent year on record (1994) are among the worst (36th in child death; 40th in teen death) in the nation.



Deaths Among Children & Teens

Average Annual Percent • By Cause • By Race
Oklahoma • 1991-1995



Talking Points:

Over the last several decades, the leading causes of death for children and teens have changed from natural causes, such as illness and birth defects, to injury and violence.

The majority of teen deaths can be attributed to preventable factors, including unhealthy behaviors such as sedentary lifestyle, poor nutritional habits, substance use and abuse, unsafe sexual practices and risky vehicle use.

Increases in suicide are much greater among adolescents than among the general population. Oklahoma's young people kill themselves at a rate almost twice the national average.

Having a gun at home is associated with increased suicide risk among older adolescents. Being connected with community, school and family decreases that risk.

Minority children are more likely to lack health insurance, to have more difficulty obtaining appropriate and necessary medical care, to have lower incomes creating significant financial barriers to care, and to receive care in hospital emergency rooms. Minority children are less likely to receive lifesaving preventive services.

Risk of accidents increases for low-income families as they are less likely to use safety devices due to lack of money, lack of transportation to obtain them and/or a lack of control over their housing conditions.

COUNTIES WITH THE TEN HIGHEST CHILD DEATH RATES 1991-1995

More than one-third (79 average annual or 34.8%) of children age 1-14 dying in Oklahoma are from two counties: Oklahoma (44 annual average or 19.2%) and Tulsa (36 annual average or 15.6%).

1. Cotton 89.6 per 100,000
2. Tillman 82.9 per 100,000
3. Haskell 72.1 per 100,000
4. Marshall 71.1 per 100,000
5. Atoka 68.7 per 100,000
6. Choctaw 64.9 per 100,000
7. Garvin 63.8 per 100,000
8. Pushmataha 62.5 per 100,000
9. Jefferson 59.3 per 100,000
10. Murray 58.1 per 100,000

