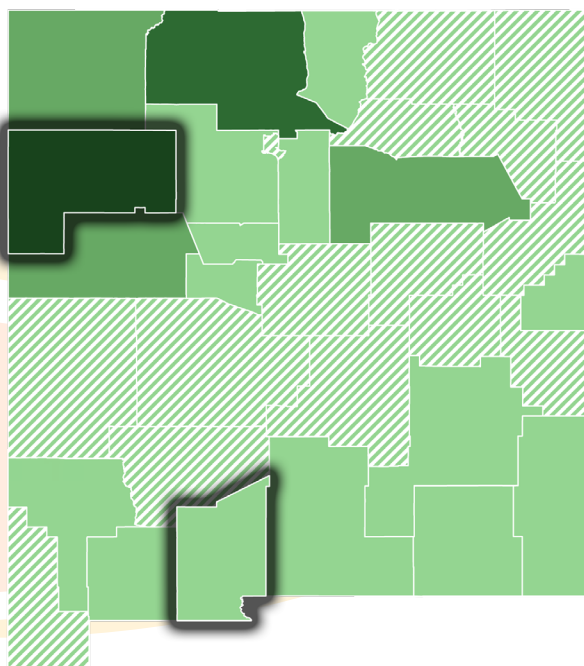


### Childhood bereavement is a critical issue and an increasingly important national priority.

The Childhood Bereavement Estimation Model® (CBEM) approximates bereavement rates for U.S. youth<sup>1</sup> using vital statistics from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.<sup>2</sup> The 2025 CBEM Key Topic reports explore bereavement in each U.S. county using data from 2019 to 2023, the five most recent years available.

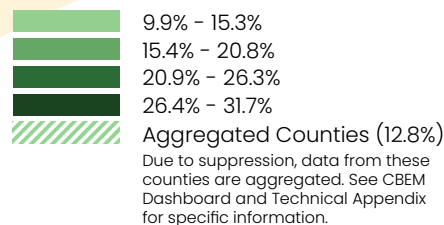
### CBEM Projected Results by County\*



**HIGHEST**  
McKinley  
1 in 3 children

**LOWEST**  
Doña Ana  
1 in 10 children

#### KEY\*\*



\*Bereavement due to parent or sibling death before age 18.

\*\*Bereavement ranges are state-specific. County-level comparisons across states should not be made.

### CBEM Model Type

CBEM Analyses yield multiple types of estimates. This report focuses on **Projected** and **Current** bereavement estimates related to the death of parent or sibling before age 18. These tables compare Projected and Current estimates in McKinley and Dona Ana counties in New Mexico.

**CBEM Projected results** (map above) include both children who are already bereaved and those expected to experience the death of a parent or sibling by age 18. In McKinley County, an estimated 31.7% or 1 in 3 children, will grieve the death of a parent or sibling in childhood.

**CBEM Current results** reflect the number of children who have already experienced such a loss. For example, in McKinley County, 17.3% or 1 in 6 children under 18 are currently grieving the death of parent or sibling.

Geography	% of children bereaved		# of children bereaved		1 in X children	
McKinley County	31.7%	17.3%	6,098	3,325	1 in 3	1 in 6
Doña Ana County	9.9%	4.8%	5,302	2,555	1 in 10	1 in 21
New Mexico	14.2%	7.2%	66K	33K	1 in 7	1 in 14
United States	8.9%	4.5%	6.4M	3.3M	1 in 11	1 in 22

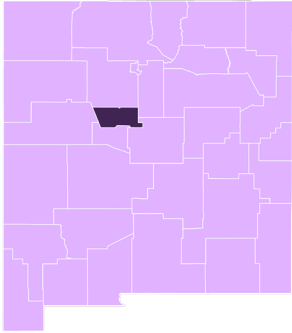
Projected Model      Current Model

### Call to Action

New CBEM county-level estimates reveal striking disparities in childhood bereavement prevalence across counties, often reflecting broader inequities in health, income, and access to care. These data offer a vital opportunity for local leaders, educators, health providers, and policymakers to take informed action—directing resources where they are needed most. Every child deserves space to grieve, heal, thrive, no matter where they live.



Find Your Local  
CBEM Data



CBEM Current results show **BERNALILLO COUNTY** has the highest number of children already bereaved.

### Social Security Survivor Benefits<sup>3</sup> for Children

According to 2025 CBEM Current results, an estimated 2,614,000 children in the U.S. are **already bereaved** due to **parent** death. Approximately 29,497 of these children live in New Mexico and 8,511 in Bernalillo County.

Social Security Administration survivor benefits (SSA) can provide vital financial support to New Mexico children who have lost a working parent. Averaging \$1,100 monthly, SSA benefits help pay for essentials like housing, food, clothing, and education, offering stability during a time of financial and emotional upheaval.

Data show SSA benefits are significantly underutilized.<sup>4,5</sup> Nationally, 55% of bereaved children do not receive the benefit. Approximately 10% do not qualify, leaving an estimated 45% of eligible bereaved children without critical financial support.

**Nationally, an estimated \$15.5B in SSA benefits go unclaimed each year by families with children who have lost a parent.**

### Estimated Annual Unclaimed SSA Benefits for New Mexico Children<sup>†</sup>

**BERNALILLO  
COUNTY**  
Bereaved Children

**\$51M**  
ANNUALLY



**NEW MEXICO**  
Bereaved Children

**\$175M**  
ANNUALLY

<sup>†</sup> Calculated as: current number of bereaved children × 45% eligibility rate × \$1,100 monthly SSA benefit × 12 months.

### Closing the Gap

**Social Security Administration (SSA)** benefits provide stability for children after the death of a parent or caregiver—but often, that support never reaches those who need it most. Addressing barriers like limited public awareness, burdensome requirements, and adverse impacts on other federal or state benefits (e.g., housing, food, healthcare) would aid access to this financial lifeline.

States like Utah have taken promising steps by identifying bereaved youth and mobilizing resources for bereaved families statewide.<sup>6</sup> The following actions can close the gap.

- **Bereaved families:** Call SSA at 1-800-772-1213 as soon as possible to initiate benefits access
- **Grief centers and schools:** Identify eligible children and families to facilitate SSA benefits access
- **Advocates & Policymakers:** Work together to advance policy changes and reduce barriers to SSA benefits access

Judi's House/JAG Institute supports the recommendations provided in the 2025 SSI report by the Social Security Advisory Board.<sup>7</sup> Now is the time for bold, coordinated action to remove administrative hurdles and safeguard access to essential supports. Grief is already heavy enough—families should not also bear the weight of financial hardship. Together, we can ensure every eligible child receives the support they deserve.



For more info about the CBEM and additional national, state, and local data, visit: [cbem.judishouse.org](https://cbem.judishouse.org)

### Sources

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2. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Health Statistics, CDC WONDER Online Database.
3. Social Security Administration (2024).
4. Weaver, D. (2025, June 16) Real Clear Markets.
5. Weaver, D. (2019). Population Review, 58(2).
6. Children's Collaborative (2023). Utah Children's Collaborative.
7. Social Security Advisory Board (2025).