

Oklahoma Midwife-Attended Births

DATA BRIEF



Background

Oklahoma has a population of about four million people, with over a third living in a rural area. As of August 2026, there are 41 birthing hospitals in the state, with three hospitals recently closing their labor and delivery departments. However, about half of Oklahoma's birthing hospitals are in the Oklahoma City and Tulsa areas. There are 52 counties in Oklahoma (67.5%) that have no birthing hospitals, and many that have no or limited obstetrical providers.

Issues related to transportation, childcare, poverty, care availability, and insurance status pose challenges to accessing family planning and maternal healthcare in the state, and can be more challenging for individuals living in rural areas.

Midwifery Supportive Policies & Initiatives^{1,2}



Supporting independent practice



Allowing midwives hospital admitting privileges



Pay parity for midwives

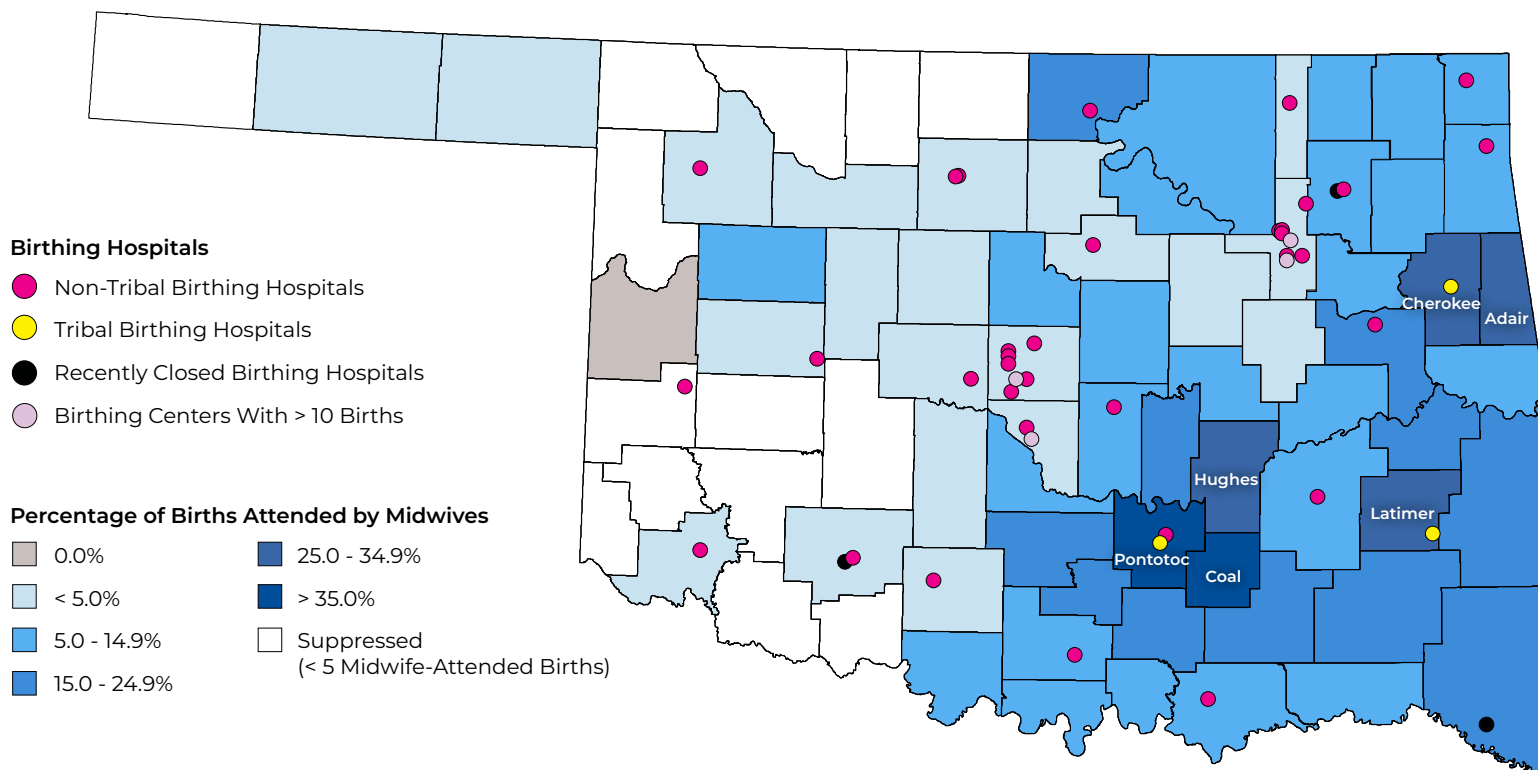


Licensure for certified midwives (CMs) was expanded



OPQIC Midwifery Project³

Midwife-Attended Births* by Maternal County of Residence Oklahoma, 2022-2024



* Births were considered attended by a midwife if the attendant on the birth certificate was a CNM/CM, other midwife, or if a midwife-related term was written for other attendant title, in any birthplace (e.g., hospital, birthing center, home birth)

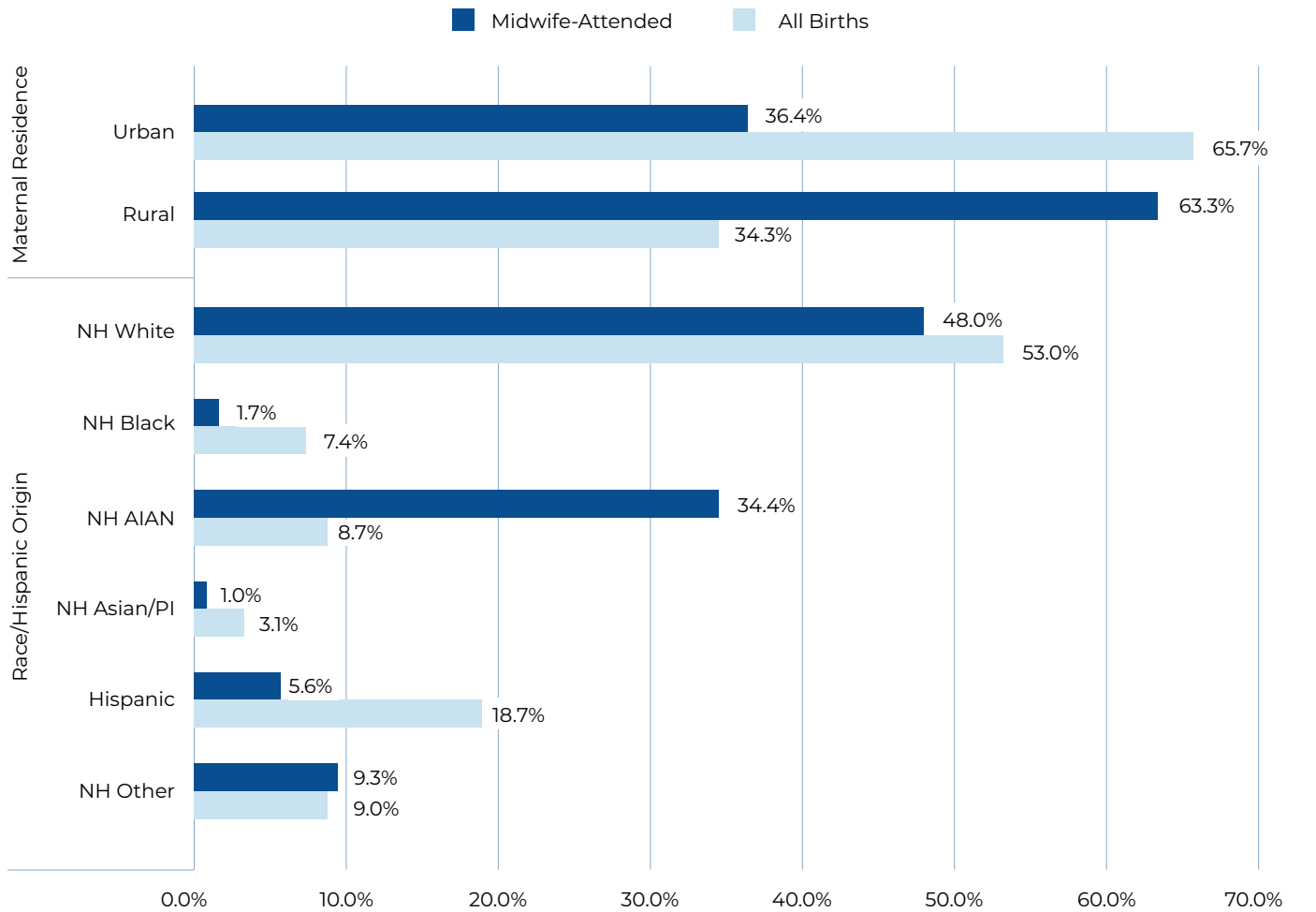
All counties with 25%+ of births attended by midwives are labeled on map

Oklahoma Midwifery

In Oklahoma, the percentage of midwife-attended births has increased since 2017 (5.1%), reaching a high of 6.0% in 2024. Midwife-attended births differ by geography as well as race and Hispanic origin.

Currently, the majority of midwife-attended births occur in hospitals (68.6%), followed by home (18.5%), and birth centers (12.4%). Tribal hospitals in Oklahoma have integrated midwifery care into their labor and delivery units, mostly in rural areas of Eastern Oklahoma, largely accounting for the large proportion of midwife-attended births in hospitals. Non-tribal hospitals are also beginning to integrate midwifery care, therefore an increase in overall midwife-attended births is expected in the future.

Demographic Comparisons of Midwife-Attended Births with Overall Births
Oklahoma, 2022-2024



Source: Oklahoma Vital Statistics, 2022-2024 NH = Non-Hispanic AIAN = American Indian/Alaska Native PI = Pacific Islander

The data shows that in areas where midwifery is well established, such as through integration in Oklahoma tribal facilities, women are utilizing midwifery care. Support for midwifery has fluctuated over the years, but the current focus on improving access to care has raised awareness of the profession as a viable option for low-risk pregnancies in areas with a shortage of physicians and birthing hospitals. In the most rural areas of the state, midwives can safely fill the gap where hospitals and physicians are not easily accessible.

References:

1.

Stoneburner A, Chestnut JF, Lucas R, Jones EE, DeMaria AL. "Nowhere to Go: Maternity Care Deserts Across the U.S." Report No. 5. March of Dimes, 2026. <https://www.marchofdimes.org/maternity-care-deserts-report>

2.

Key Midwifery Policies. Oklahoma Perinatal Improvement Collaborative. Accessed Sept. 28, 2026. <https://www.themidwiferyproject.org/>

3.

The Midwifery Project. Oklahoma Perinatal Quality Improvement Collaborative. Accessed Sept. 22, 2026. <https://www.themidwiferyproject.org/>

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