INDICATOR
Percent of children living in single-parent households.

Numerator: Number of children living with their own parent in a household with male or female head, with no partner present.

Denominator: Child residences aged 0 to 18, in all living arrangements, including dual parent, or living alone.

DESCRIPTION
This metric is the percent of children living in single parent families, including mother- or father-headed families.

IMPORTANCE
Children living in single-parent households often have less stability, fewer rules, harsher discipline, and less supervision, all of which may impede social-emotional development. These children often live in more economically disadvantaged families, which can negatively impact the child’s development (Amato, 2005). Compared to children in two-parent families, children in single-parent households are more likely to drop out of school, have a teen pregnancy, or experience their own divorce in adulthood (Sapharas, 2016).

LIMITATIONS
• The exact mechanism for increased stress on a child in a single-parent family is not known, and a parent may be able to counteract the potential disadvantage through enhanced parenting, a supportive family/community, and additional financial resources.
• This metric does not account for live-in partners or close relatives that may have frequent contact with a child.

ADDITIONAL ANALYSES
Wisconsin Analyses
Wisconsin rates have been steady since before 2012.

National Analyses
Nationally, the percent of children living in families with two parents has decreased over 20%, between 1960, when nine out of every ten kids lived in a two parent home and 2016, when only seven out of ten do. (Porter, 2016)

SOURCE
Sapharas, Nicole K., et al. (2016). Effects of Parental Divorce or a Father’s Death on High School Completion. Psychology in the Schools, 53(8), 861-874.