



*Promoting public policy that enhances the lives of children and youth in Vermont*

**UNDER EMBARGO Until Monday, June 17 at 12:01 a.m. ET**

Contact: Sarah Teel | [steel@voicesforvkids.org](mailto:steel@voicesforvkids.org) 802-229-6377

**Vermont ranks sixth overall for children's well-being, but ranks 17<sup>th</sup> for children's economic well-being, due largely to high housing costs**

*30th KIDS COUNT® Data Book* provides the most comprehensive annual report on child well-being in the United States

**Montpelier, Vermont** —Vermont narrowly missed regaining a spot in the top five states for child well-being, according to the annual *KIDS COUNT® Data Book*, released today by the Annie E. Casey Foundation. The *2019 Data Book* is the 30th edition of a yearly data study based on U.S. census and other publicly available data, representing all 50 states, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico.

The *Data Book* uses 16 indicators to rank each state across four domains — health, education, economic well-being, and family and community — as an assessment of child well-being. Across the domains of health, education, and family and community, Vermont landed in the top ten. The state fared less well in economic well-being, an area in which Vermont often scores lower than in the other three. This year, Vermont was 17th for children's economic well-being, according to the *Data Book*.

Compared to 2010, the percentage of children in poverty declined from 17 percent in 2010 to 14 percent in 2017. About 2,000 youth ages 16-19 (5 percent) are not attending school and not working. Twenty-five percent of all children live in families where no parent has full-time, year-round employment.

Families who spend more than 30 percent of their income on housing are considered to have a "high housing cost burden." Mirroring the United States as a whole, the number and percentage of children in households with a high housing cost burden has improved slightly in Vermont, but at 31 percent and 37,000 kids, Vermont still ranks 34th in the nation for this indicator, bringing down the state's economic well-being ranking significantly and contributing to increased toxic stress, food insecurity, housing insecurity, and homelessness.

"All parts of children's lives are connected, and economic security is integral to the other domains," says Sarah Teel, research director at Voices for Vermont's Children, an independent child advocacy non-profit. "We encourage policymakers to pursue the returns that would be realized — across economic, health, child welfare, and education sectors — from investments in the basic needs of every child and the economic security of their families."

In other areas of child well-being, Vermont ranks:

- Third in the family and community domain. Sharing in the national trend, Vermont has seen a steady decline in teen births, and Vermont ranks fourth for this indicator, with 206 teen births in Vermont in 2017, a rate of 10 births per 1,000 females ages 15-19. Vermont also ranks well (fifth) for the percentage of children in households where the household head lacks a high school diploma. This translates to 7,000 kids. While this is an area in which Vermont fares better than most other states, it's a condition that can greatly impact families' financial stability. About 6,000 kids in Vermont live in households below 50 percent of the poverty line.
- Fifth in education. Vermont is among the top 10 states for all four education indicators: proficiency in both reading and math, on-time high school graduation and preschool attendance. There has been a gradual increase in the number and percentage of 3- and 4-year-olds attending school: in the period between 2009-2011, 48 percent of young children were in school, compared to 55 percent in 2015-2017, representing a gain of about 1,000 more kids enrolled in preschool in Vermont.
- Ninth in health. Progress in children's health-insurance coverage has plateaued at about 2,000 children remaining uninsured for the last several years. With 98 percent of children covered, Vermont ranks second in the country on this measure, behind only Massachusetts. It is estimated that about 5 percent of 12 – 17-year-olds abused alcohol in the past year. The range across states is 3 percent to 7 percent, and the rate in the U.S. overall is 4 percent.

The Casey Foundation points to areas of tremendous improvement in children's lives nationally — including access to health care, decreased rates of teen childbearing and increased rates of high school graduation — and draws a direct line to policies that support this success. There are steps that policymakers should take to help all children thrive. Voices for Vermont's Children joins the Casey Foundation in calling on elected officials and representatives to:

- *Expand the programs that make and keep kids healthy.* For the sake of all children, regardless of their immigration status, states should expand access to health care and health insurance.
- *Provide the tools proven to help families lift themselves up economically.* Federal and state earned income tax credits (EITC) and child tax credit programs mean working parents can use more of their take-home pay to meet their children's needs.
- *Address ethnic and racial inequities.* The national averages of child well-being can mask the reality that black and brown children still face a greater number of obstacles. While the national child population has grown by over 9 million, Vermont's child population has declined by about 26,000 kids since 1990, solely because of a decline in the non-Hispanic white child population. Estimates show increases in child populations for all other races/ethnicities in Vermont. Structural barriers and inequities must be eliminated to move toward equity.
- *Count all kids.* Ensure the 2020 census counts all children, including those under 5 years old and from hard-to-count areas. Vermont relies on federal funds

determined by an accurate census count. According to a study from the George Washington University Institute of Public Policy, Vermont received nearly \$2.5 billion in 2016, via 55 federal programs based on the 2010 census count.

“America’s children are one-quarter of our population and 100 percent of our future,” said Casey Foundation President and CEO Lisa Hamilton. “All of the 74 million kids in our increasingly diverse country have unlimited potential, and we have the data, knowledge and evidence to create the policies that will help them realize it. It’s incumbent on us to do just that.”

### **Release Information**

The *2019 KIDS COUNT® Data Book* will be available June 17 at 12:01 a.m. EDT at [www.aecf.org](http://www.aecf.org). Additional information is available at [www.aecf.org/databook](http://www.aecf.org/databook). Journalists interested in creating maps, graphs and rankings in stories about the *Data Book* can use the KIDS COUNT® Data Center at [datacenter.kidscount.org](http://datacenter.kidscount.org).

### **About Voices for Vermont’s Children**

Voices for Vermont’s Children is a statewide, multi-issue, independent nonprofit that promotes public policy to enhance the lives of children and youth in Vermont. For more information, visit [www.voicesforvtkids.org](http://www.voicesforvtkids.org). Follow Voices for Vermont’s Children and this issue on Twitter [@voices4vtkids](https://twitter.com/voices4vtkids) and on Facebook.

### **About the Annie E. Casey Foundation**

The Annie E. Casey Foundation creates a brighter future for the nation’s children by developing solutions to strengthen families, build paths to economic opportunity and transform struggling communities into safer and healthier places to live, work and grow. For more information, visit [www.aecf.org](http://www.aecf.org).

###