



County Pages

INTRODUCTION TO DATA

Vermont KIDS COUNT does not conduct surveys or gather direct data. We obtain data from a number of reliable sources, including the U.S. Bureau of the Census and Vermont state agencies. KIDS COUNT data are presented on a state, county, school, or school district/supervisory union level.

Indicators

The term “indicator” describes data that are related to outcomes of well-being of children, youth and families. An indicator can be measured in terms of number, rate, and change over time.

Number

The number is the count of events for an indicator. Most indicators are shown as three-year averages. (See Averaging Numbers below.)

Rate

A rate is the relationship between the number of events (such as early prenatal care) to the total related population (new mothers). The result provides a standard form with which to compare populations across different geographic areas (such as counties), of different sizes (county compared to state), or over periods of time (2000 to 2006).

Percent

A percent is a rate that is based on 100 of the related population, or “per 100.”

Percent Change Over Time

This calculation is used to examine the percent difference in a rate between two points in time. For our county pages, we do not calculate percent change over time for rates based on counts of fewer than five.

Averaging Numbers

For many indicators presented in the KIDS COUNT pages, numbers and rates represent the average of three years of data. This provides more reliable figures for data that may fluctuate greatly from year to year. The only indicators with single-year data are median income and poverty.

Small Numbers and Rates

Use caution when comparing rates over time and between counties for small populations and for indicators with small numbers. Rates based on small numbers may show huge changes from one year to the next—even if the actual number of events only rose from 2 to 3. In this case, we suggest using numbers over time, rather than rates.

Comparing state data from different sources

Vermont KIDS COUNT and national KIDS COUNT data

The national KIDS COUNT Data Book and online data provide state-to-state data on 10 key indicators. It is released independently from Vermont KIDS COUNT Data products and Voices for Vermont's Children online data. The two report on many of the same indicators but the data sometimes vary. Therefore, it is best to view findings for each separately.

Differences in numbers may be due to slightly different reporting methods, use of different years, or different sources. For example, the Vermont Health Department provides our child population estimates, which are slightly different from those reported in the National KIDS COUNT Data Book. Although both estimates use the same Census source, the Health Department also uses additional methods to increase the accuracy of its numbers.

A Caution about Drawing Conclusions

The key in the evaluation of statistics is to examine everything in context. The data challenge stereotypes, pushing us to look beyond the surface for the less obvious reasons for the numbers. Individual indicators, like the rest of life's concerns, don't exist in a vacuum and can't be reduced to a set of best and worst counties.

Where county-level data are presented, readers can see whether rates are "high" or "low," relative to the state rate. However, while regional rates do provide a useful "snapshot" of conditions for a particular time-period, their reliability for inferring stable differences between one county and another is uncertain. For this report, the significance of any such differences was not subjected to statistical testing.

Using KIDS COUNT Data

Local and state analysis is critical to identifying the well-being of Vermont children and families, which may be overshadowed by national studies that rank the status of Vermont children high compared to those in other states. Vermont KIDS COUNT data offer a more in-depth look at the realities behind the headlines, by bringing attention to the needs of the state's young people and their families, through data reported at state, county, school and school district/supervisory union levels.

Who Uses KIDS COUNT Data

KIDS COUNT data helps others make a difference for young people—serving as useful tools for local citizens, government and nonprofit groups, as well as for service agencies.

Policy makers and state advocates use the data to increase public awareness and to inform their work on specific child and youth issues, citizens and community groups use it for grassroots organizing, service providers use the information in program planning and grant writing; and educators use the data to inform youth and get them involved in their own futures.

We urge you to incorporate the research from Vermont KIDS COUNT into your own activities on behalf of young people. Together, we can help advance state, community and individual efforts to enhance the lives of Vermont children and youth.

Examples of how you can use Vermont KIDS COUNT data:

- Create a fact sheet to bring attention to an issue in your community. If you've heard that more children are showing up at the local emergency food shelf and you want to research the economic status of children in your county, look at the trends in students approved for Federal School Meals programs.
- Service providers who want to apply for foundation funds to address a particular need can back up their grant proposals with data. Local stories can provide a human face to an issue, while statistics document the level of need.
- Citizens can inform themselves and their area legislators through Vermont KIDS COUNT data. Ask candidates for public office if they know about the status of children and youth in their area, and what they have accomplished in improving children's well-being.

Voices
for Vermont's Children

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