

NEWS



**Enclosed are the NJ Kids Count 2019 State News Release and Regional News Releases
in the following order:**

1. State News Release

Regionals News Releases:

2. Atlantic, Cape May, Cumberland and Salem

3. Bergen, Essex, Hudson and Passaic

3. Burlington, Camden and Gloucester

4. Hunterdon

5. Mercer

6. Middlesex and Somerset

7. Monmouth and Ocean

8. Morris

9. Union

10. Warren and Sussex

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Kids Count is a national and state-by-state statistical effort to track the state of children, sponsored by the Annie E. Casey Foundation. Advocates for Children of New Jersey is a statewide child research and action organization and the New Jersey Kids Count grantee.

Giving Every Child A Chance

NEWS



2019 NJ County Kids Count: Outcomes in Child Well-Being Vary by Race and Region

New interactive data dashboard underscores importance of Census data

November 22, 2019 – Despite rising median incomes and declining unemployment rates, geographic and racial gaps persist among New Jersey children across multiple areas of child well-being, according to the NJ Kids Count County Data Dashboard released today by Advocates for Children of New Jersey (ACNJ).

Although prior Kids Count reports have provided statewide data on race, the 2019 NJ County Kids Count provides some race data at the county level, allowing individuals to look at equity issues in their own communities.

The [new interactive dashboard](#) features dozens of measures of child well-being at the state and county level in the following areas: demographics, child and family economics, early care and education, child health, child protection, school children, and teens and young adults.

The printer-friendly Kids Count Pocket Guide is also available, featuring a selection of the indicators available on the data dashboard.

In New Jersey, nearly a quarter of black and Hispanic children live in poor families, defined as earning just over \$25,000 for a family of four. On average, 14 percent of New Jersey's children live in poverty, compared to 7 percent of white and Asian children.

“We’ve known for a long time that children of color are more likely to face poorer outcomes in every domain of child well-being and state leaders have become increasingly focused on addressing these disparities,” Cecilia Zalkind, president and CEO of ACNJ, said. “We commend the state’s efforts to tackle these issues head on and acknowledge that change does not happen overnight. Our hope is that the data dashboard serves as a baseline for policymakers to assess the impact of current efforts to ensure that every child has a pathway to a productive future.”

Statewide reforms have resulted in dramatic declines in both New Jersey’s number of youth admitted to detention centers annually as well as the number of children living in foster care. However, racial disparities persist:

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- Black children comprise 41 percent of the total number of NJ children in foster care, despite occupying less than 15 percent of the state's total child population. Nearly a quarter of New Jersey's foster care population are Hispanic.
- Black and Hispanic youth make up 63 percent and 23 percent, respectively, of the total statewide juvenile detention center admissions. Atlantic, Burlington, Essex and Mercer have the highest percentages of black youth admitted to juvenile detention, representing more than 70 percent of admissions. In Bergen, Passaic and Somerset, Hispanic youth represent 41 to 45 percent of their detention population.

Disparities continue in maternal and infant health in the area of prenatal care, infant mortality and low birthweights. Statewide, 8 percent of babies are born with low birthweights, but among black newborns, that figure is 12 percent.

In New Jersey, babies born to black mothers are over three times more likely to die before their first birthday at a rate of 9.6 per 1,000 births compared to white babies at 2.6 per 1,000 births. Three counties, Atlantic, Camden and Mercer, had double-digit black infant mortality rates, at 14.5, 14.2 and 15.1 per 1,000 births.

Between 2013 and 2017, the percentage of expectant mothers receiving prenatal care beginning in their first trimester dipped from 79 to 75 percent. Among black and Hispanic mothers, receipt of early prenatal care fell below the state average at 60 and 65 percent, respectively. In Mercer County, fewer than half of black and Hispanic pregnant women received early prenatal care.

"First Lady Tammy Murphy has prioritized reducing rates of infant and maternal mortality as well as addressing corresponding racial disparities," Zalkind said. "And the state has worked hard to improve systems to help vulnerable and at-risk children and youth. New Jersey's Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative (JDAI) has significantly reduced the number of youth locked up without risk to public safety. And the state Judiciary and the NJ Department of Children and Families have a renewed focus on racial disparities in children in out-of-home placement."

In child health, the Garden State saw mixed progress. Though NJ FamilyCare saw child enrollment increase between 2014 and 2018, a one-year uptick from 2017 to 2018 in uninsured rates for children under age 19 indicates a need to monitor the data. In addition, fewer children under age 6 were tested for lead in 2017, compared to 2013.

New Jersey continues to see a decline in teen births, but the rate of sexually transmitted diseases among youth ages 15 to 19 increased in all but three counties - Cape May, Cumberland and Warren. Several counties saw increases of more than 50 percent between 2014 and 2018, with Salem County's teen STD rate nearly doubled, from a rate of 1,302.5 per 100,000 teens to 2,551.8 per 100,000 teens.

While the data are alarming, they may also reflect increased numbers of teens getting tested.

“The disparities draw attention to the need for stronger investments and access to services and programs for New Jersey children and youth,” said Zalkind. “With every Kids Count release, our hope is that policymakers, stakeholders and community leaders use the data as a tool to make positive changes in their own backyard.”

NJ Kids Count underscores how essential accurate data are to assessing the well-being of children and making informed decisions. It is estimated that 27,000 children under age 5 were missed in the last Census, and the upcoming count may miss even more if young children are not a priority. The stakes are high: many major federal programs, including Head Start and NJ FamilyCare, allocate more than \$22.7 billion to New Jersey each year based on census data.

ACNJ is coordinating the statewide non-profit Census outreach effort to promote participation and ensure that all of New Jersey’s children and residents are counted. To learn more, visit [Census2020NJ.org](https://www.census2020nj.org).

Key Trends:

Demographics. New Jersey’s child population is increasingly diverse. More than 50 percent of the child population are children of color - 14 percent are black, 27 percent are Hispanic, 10 percent are Asian and 9 percent are of some other race.

Median Income. The median income for families with children in New Jersey rose by 16 percent between 2014 and 2018, but the difference in wealth varies greatly. Hunterdon’s median income of \$166,766 is more than three times greater than Cumberland’s median income of \$49,521.

Child Poverty. Roughly 264,000 children live in poverty, defined as earning just over \$25,000 for a family of four, accounting for 14 percent of the Garden State’s nearly 2 million children. Morris, Somerset and Sussex had the three lowest percentages of child poverty at less than 6 percent, compared to Essex, Hudson and Passaic, where 22 percent of children live in poverty.

Childhood Lead Exposure. In 2017, 2.8 percent of all tested New Jersey children under 6 years old had 5 micrograms/deciliter or more of lead in their blood, down from 3.4 percent in 2013. Salem had the highest percentage of tested children under age 6 with elevated blood lead levels at 9.2 percent, followed by Essex and Cumberland at 4.8 and 4.5 percent, respectively.

Child Health. New Jersey’s rate of uninsured children under age 19 was at 3.9 percent in 2018, increasing slightly from 3.7 percent in 2017. Essex and Passaic Counties ranked last on this indicator with 6.9 percent of children without health insurance.

Child Care. In 2018, more than 409,000, or 68 percent, of children ages 0 to 5 had all available parents in the workforce. The median weekly licensed child care cost for an infant was \$250, with costs varying by county. The number of licensed centers grew by 5 percent between 2014 and 2018 from 3,964 to 4,169, respectively.

Education. Cumberland and Essex Counties had the highest percentages of chronic absenteeism, with more than 15 percent missing at least 10 percent of enrolled school days or just two days a month. At 4 percent, Hunterdon had the smallest percentage of students chronically absent, with Bergen, Morris and Somerset not far behind at 6 percent. Although just half of the state's children met or exceeded expectations on their third grade English Language Arts PARCC exams, Bergen (67 percent), Hunterdon (59 percent) and Morris County (65 percent) third graders outperformed their peers.

Teens. Mirroring national trends, New Jersey continues to see a decline in births to teens ages 10-19, making up 2.8 percent of all births in 2017. In 2013, that figure was 4.2 percent. Still, declines have been sharper in some counties than in others. In Hunterdon County, fewer than 1 percent of all births were to teens, whereas in Cumberland County, it was 8.4 percent.

Safety and Well-Being. All 21 counties experienced a decline in the percentage of reported children with substantiated or established cases of child abuse or neglect, dropping statewide from 12.7 percent in 2013 to 7.1 percent in 2017. Also referred to as disconnected, or opportunity youth, 11 percent of New Jersey's teens ages 16-19 were not in school and not working. Morris had the lowest percentage of disconnected youth, while Cumberland had the highest at 26 percent.

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Atlantic, Cape May, Cumberland and Salem Fall Behind Statewide Trends in Child Well-being, NJ Kids Count 2019 finds

Atlantic, Cape May, Cumberland and Salem counties fall behind statewide figures when it comes to their children’s economic stability, health, education, and safety and well-being, according to the NJ Kids Count County Data Dashboard, released today by Advocates for Children of New Jersey (ACNJ).

With the exception of Cape May, the percent of children living in poverty exceeded the state’s average of 14 percent at 19 percent (Atlantic), 21 percent (Cumberland) and 16 percent (Salem).

“There is some good news, however,” said Cecilia Zalkind, ACNJ president and CEO. “Atlantic County’s graduation rate is on par with the state at 91 percent. In Salem, only 2.2 percent of children are without health insurance. And both Cape May and Cumberland had 66 percent of their low-income children participating in school breakfast, compared to the statewide average of 57 percent, ensuring students get a nutritious start to their school day.”

“It is our hope that community members, state leaders and fellow advocates use the data to drive concrete action at the state, county and local levels,” Zalkind added. “When we use data to inform critical decisions about responding to the needs of children, everyone benefits -- children, families, our communities and our state.”

The new interactive dashboard features dozens of measures of child well-being at the state and county level in the following areas: demographics, child and family economics, early care and education, child health, child protection, school children, and teens and young adults. In addition, the dashboard provides some race data by county, allowing individuals to look at equity issues in their own communities and revealing wide disparities in demographics, health, child protection and juvenile justice among children of color.

The printer-friendly Kids Count Pocket Guide is also available, featuring a selection of the indicators available on the data dashboard.

Key Trends

Demographics. New Jersey's child population is increasingly diverse. Sixty-six percent of Atlantic County's child population are children of color. In Cumberland, Hispanic children make up 47 percent of the child population.

Child and Family Economics. Atlantic, Salem, Cumberland and Cape May all saw at least a 31 percent decline in unemployment rates since 2014, with Atlantic County experiencing the greatest decrease of 44 percent. With the exception of Salem, median incomes for families with children rose since 2014. Still, earnings were well below the statewide average of \$103,429, with Cumberland County having the lowest among all 21 counties at \$49,521.

More than 30 percent of black (45 percent) and Hispanic (32 percent) children in Atlantic County live in poverty, compared to their white peers at 5 percent. Nearly a quarter of black and Hispanic children in Cumberland County live in poor families. Poverty is defined as earning \$25,465 for a family of four or less in 2018.

Child Health. Salem saw a significant decrease in the number of children without health insurance, from 7.7 percent in 2017 to 2.2 percent in 2018. Although Cumberland's child uninsured rate also fell, its rate of 4.5 was still higher than the state average of 3.9. During that same time period, Atlantic and Cape May saw an uptick in the number of uninsured children.

Atlantic and Cumberland experienced a decrease in the percentage of expectant mothers receiving prenatal care from 76 to 74 percent and 71 to 67 percent, respectively, between 2013 and 2017.

Education. Although Atlantic, Cape May, Cumberland and Salem counties all also saw increases in their graduation rates, only one - Atlantic - had a graduation rate on par with the state average of 91 percent. Cumberland County had the state's highest percentage of students who were chronically absent at 16 percent. Chronic absenteeism is defined as missing 10 percent or more school days.

Teens and Young Adults. The percentage of teens not in school and not working, sometimes referred to as idle or disconnected youth, was 14 percent in Atlantic and Salem. The rates were even greater in Cape May and Cumberland at 19 and 26 percent respectively. The state average was 11 percent. The percentage of teen births were down across all counties, but, Atlantic and Salem saw an increase in STD rates. This mirrors statewide trends, though some of the increase in STD rates may be due to a greater number of teens getting tested.

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NEWS



Progress in Child Well-Being Mixed in Bergen, Essex, Hudson and Passaic, NJ Kids Count County Finds

Outcomes for children in Bergen, Essex, Hudson and Passaic counties show progress across multiple measures of child well-being, but racial and geographic disparities persist, according to the NJ Kids Count County Data Dashboard released today by Advocates for Children of New Jersey (ACNJ).

At \$135,000, Bergen County surpassed the statewide median income for families with children of \$103,000. By comparison, Essex, Hudson and Passaic earnings ranged between \$71,000 and \$76,000.

Bergen County children are less likely to live in poverty compared to their statewide peers. Essex, Hudson and Passaic, however, had child poverty rates above the state average of 14 percent, though each county saw a decline in child poverty between 2014 and 2018. On a positive note, these same three counties had higher percentages of children under age 6 tested for lead than the state average.

The new interactive dashboard features dozens of measures of child well-being at the state and county level in the following areas: demographics, child and family economics, early care and education, child health, child protection, school children, and teens and young adults. In addition, the dashboard provides some race data by county, allowing individuals to look at equity issues in their own communities and revealing wide disparities in demographics, health, child protection and juvenile justice among children of color.

“Giving children the best start in life means also ensuring that they have strong supports,” said Cecilia Zalkind, ACNJ president and CEO. “If Governor Murphy is committed to his vision of building a ‘stronger, fairer’ New Jersey, the release of NJ Kids Count 2019 is an opportune time to look at these gaps at the community level to make sure that every child benefits from the positive gains the state is making as a whole.”

“When we use data to inform critical decisions about responding to the needs of children, everyone benefits -- children, families, our communities and our state,” Zalkind added.

The printer-friendly Kids Count Pocket Guide is also available, featuring a selection of the indicators available on the data dashboard.

Key Trends

Demographics. More than half of Bergen’s child population are children of color, with Hispanic children representing 26 percent. In Essex, Hudson and Passaic, more than 88 percent of the child population are children of color. Black children make up 41 percent of Essex’s child population while Hispanic children make up more than 50 percent of the Hudson and Passaic child populations.

Child Health. In 2017, Bergen County saw a lower infant mortality rate than the rest of the state at 2.8 percent compared to 4.5 percent. Since 2013, the rate of infant deaths in Bergen county declined by 16 percent. Essex and Passaic also saw declines in their county’s infant mortality rate, while Hudson experienced a slight increase.

In Essex County, 55 percent of black mothers and 60 percent of Hispanic mothers received early prenatal care in 2017 compared to the county average of 65 percent. In contrast, 80 percent of Asian mothers and 85 percent of white mothers received early prenatal care. Hudson and Passaic mirrored these same disparities, with 63 and 66 percent of black mothers receiving prenatal care during their first trimester, respectively.

In Essex and Hudson, babies born to black mothers were more than four times more likely to die before their first birthday at a rate of 9.1 per 1,000 births (Essex) and 8.8 per 1,000 births in (Hudson), compared to their white counterparts. Passaic County also saw a higher black infant mortality rate at 6.8 compared to 2.6 for white infants and 3.6 for Hispanic infants.

Education. Bergen fared better than the state in the percentage of third graders meeting or exceeding expectations on the English Language Arts PARCC exams at 67 percent, compared to the statewide average of 52 percent. Students in the other three counties, however, did not, with 39 percent of Passaic and 49 percent of Essex and Hudson third graders meeting or exceeding expectations in English Language Arts.

A morning meal helps ensure a nutritious start to the school day, but in Bergen County, only 32 percent of low income students participated in school breakfast, compared to the state average

of 57 percent. On the other hand, Essex, Hudson and Passaic counties each had high participation rates at 70 percent, 77 percent and 65 percent, respectively.

Teens and Young Adults. The rate of STDs has been on the rise in New Jersey as a whole, but is evident in all four counties. Bergen County saw a 70 percent increase in STD rates among teenagers since 2014. Hudson saw a 24 percent increase. This mirrors statewide trends, though some of the increase in STD rates may be due to a greater number of teens getting tested.

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NEWS



Mixed Progress in Child Well-Being for Burlington, Camden, and Gloucester, NJ Kids Count County Finds

Burlington, Camden and Gloucester counties saw mixed progress in the area of child health, according to the NJ Kids Count County Data Dashboard released today by Advocates for Children of New Jersey (ACNJ).

Burlington, Camden and Gloucester all had a higher percentage of babies born with a low birthweight compared to the state average of 8 percent, at 8.5, 9.4 and 8.6 percent, respectively. Burlington and Camden experienced a decrease in the percentage of expectant mothers receiving early prenatal care between 2013 and 2017, while Gloucester saw no change.

“The overall progress in the state’s economic health among children and families is promising, but racial and geographic disparities in child well-being persist,” said Cecilia Zalkind, ACNJ president and CEO. “If Governor Murphy is committed to his vision of building a ‘stronger, fairer’ New Jersey, then the release of NJ Kids Count 2019 presents an opportune time to look at gaps at the community level to make sure that every child benefits from the positive gains the state is making as a whole.”

“When we use data to inform critical decisions about responding to the needs of children, everyone benefits -- children, families, our communities and our state,” Zalkind added.

The new interactive dashboard features dozens of measures of child well-being at the state and county level in the following areas: demographics, child and family economics, early care and education, child health, child protection, school children, and teens and young adults. In addition, the dashboard provides some race data by county, allowing individuals to look at equity issues in their own communities and revealing wide disparities in demographics, health, child protection and juvenile justice among children of color.

The printer-friendly Kids Count Pocket Guide is also available, featuring a selection of the indicators available on the data dashboard.

Key Trends

Demographics. New Jersey’s child population is increasingly diverse. Sixty-eight percent of Camden’s child population are children of color, compared to 38 percent of Burlington children and 24 percent of Gloucester children.

Child and Family Economics. More than half of Camden and Gloucester households spend more than 30 percent of income on rent. Among Burlington households, 45 percent spend too much of their household budget on housing. Twenty percent of Camden County children live in poverty, compared to the statewide average of 14 percent. Among black and Hispanic children and children of some other race living in Camden, more than 30 percent live in poor families. Poverty is defined as earning \$25,465 for a family of four or less in 2018.

Child Health. Camden’s rate of uninsured children under age 19 increased from 2.4 percent in 2017 to 4.1 percent in 2018. However, Gloucester saw fewer children without health insurance, decreasing from 2.8 percent to 1.5 percent. Burlington saw no change at 2.4 percent, below the state’s average of 3.9 percent.

Education. Although Burlington and Gloucester students surpassed the statewide high school graduation rate of 91 percent, graduating at 95 and 93 percent respectively, Camden County’s graduation rate was 88 percent. Gloucester mirrored the state in the percentage of third graders meeting or exceeding expectations on the English Language Arts PARCC exams at 52 percent, compared to Camden’s 46 percent and Burlington’s 50 percent. Twelve percent of Camden County students were chronically absent – missing 10 percent or more school days, compared to 9 percent of Burlington students and 8 percent of Gloucester students.

Teens and Young Adults. The percentage of teens not in school and not working, sometimes referred to as idle or disconnected youth, was 12 percent in Burlington and Camden, compared to 10 percent in Gloucester. The state average was 11 percent. Burlington and Camden saw fewer admissions to county detention; Gloucester saw no change. The percentage of teen births were down across all counties, but there was an increase in STD rates. This mirrors statewide trends, though some of the increase in STD rates may be due to a greater number of teens getting tested.

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Hunterdon County Outperforms State Trends in Child Well-Being, NJ Kids Count County Finds

Children in Hunterdon County continue to fare better than the rest of the state across multiple areas of child well-being, according to the NJ Kids Count County Data Dashboard released today by Advocates for Children of New Jersey (ACNJ). At about \$167,000, the median income for families with children in Hunterdon surpassed the statewide figure of \$103,000. Children in Hunterdon are also less likely to live in poverty compared to their peers throughout the state.

The [new interactive dashboard](#) features dozens of measures of child well-being at the state and county level in the following areas: demographics, child and family economics, early care and education, child health, child protection, school children, and teens and young adults. In addition, the dashboard provides some race data by county, allowing individuals to look at equity issues in their own communities and revealing wide disparities in demographics, health, child protection and juvenile justice among children of color.

“Giving children the best start in life means also ensuring that they have strong supports,” said Cecilia Zalkind, ACNJ president and CEO. “The overall progress in the county’s economic health among children and families is promising. However, there is still room for improvement. Fewer children under age 6 in Hunterdon are tested for lead than the state average and the median weekly cost for child care for an infant is the most expensive in the state at \$333 per week.”

The printer-friendly Kids Count Pocket Guide is also available, featuring a selection of the indicators available on the data dashboard.

Key Trends

Child Health. Although child health trends overall for Hunterdon County were positive, 17 percent of children under the age of 6 were tested for lead in 2017. This was up from 13 percent in 2013, but still below the state average of 26 percent.

Early Care and Education. Hunterdon’s child care costs are among the highest in the state. The median weekly child care costs in Hunterdon ranged from \$333 for an infant to \$250 for a preschooler.

Education. The county fared better than the state in the percentage of third graders meeting or exceeding expectations on the English Language Arts PARCC exams at 59 percent, compared to the statewide average of 52 percent. There is room for improvement in the area of school breakfast. The majority of students participating in free- or reduced-price lunch did not receive school breakfast, with a participation rate of 14 percent in 2018-19. This was a 30 percent drop compared to 2014-15 data.

Teens and Young Adults. Hunterdon County had fewer juvenile arrests in 2016 and fewer teen births in 2017. However, the rates of STDs between 2014 and 2018 increased by 35 percent. Twelve percent of Hunterdon County teens were not working nor in school in 2013-17. This mirrors statewide trends, though some of the increase in STD rates may be due to a greater number of teens getting tested.

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NEWS



Mixed Progress in Child Well-Being for Mercer County, NJ Kids Count County Finds

The NJ Kids Count County Data Dashboard released today by Advocates for Children of New Jersey (ACNJ) reveals mixed progress in child well-being for children in Mercer County. The county saw declines in the median income for families with children, the percentage of expectant mothers receiving early prenatal care and the percentage of children with health insurance.

On a brighter note, Mercer improved on several education indicators, with a decrease in the number of children missing too much school and an increase in the graduation rate.

“The overall progress in the state’s economic health among children and families is promising, but racial and geographic disparities in child well-being persist,” said Cecilia Zalkind, ACNJ president and CEO. “If Governor Murphy is committed to his vision of building a ‘stronger, fairer’ New Jersey, then the release of NJ Kids Count 2019 presents an opportune time to look at gaps at the community level to make sure that every child benefits from the positive gains the state is making as a whole.”

“When we use data to inform critical decisions about responding to the needs of children, everyone benefits -- children, families, our communities and our state,” Zalkind added.

The new interactive dashboard features dozens of measures of child well-being at the state and county level in the following areas: demographics, child and family economics, early care and education, child health, child protection, school children, and teens and young adults. In addition, the dashboard provides some race data by county, allowing individuals to look at equity issues in their own communities and revealing wide disparities in demographics, health, child protection and juvenile justice among children of color.

The printer-friendly Kids Count Pocket Guide is also available, featuring a selection of the indicators available on the data dashboard.

Key Trends

Demographics. New Jersey’s child population is increasingly diverse. In Mercer, 66 percent of

children are of color: 22 percent are black, 27 percent are Hispanic, 11 percent are Asian and 6 percent are of some other race.

Child and Family Economics. Bucking the statewide trend, Mercer County's median income for families with children fell from \$95,795 to \$91,175 between 2014 and 2018. However, the county did see a decrease in unemployment, declining from 5.9 to 3.7 percent during that same time period. Nearly half of all Mercer households spend more than 30 percent of income on housing.

Fourteen percent of Mercer children live in poverty, the same as the state average. Among black and Hispanic children in Mercer County, the percentage of children living in poverty was 17 and 28 percent, respectively. Among white children, that figure was 5 percent. Poverty is defined as earning \$25,465 for a family of four or less in 2018.

Child Health. Mercer's rate of uninsured children under age 19 increased from 2.5 percent in 2017 to 3.3 percent in 2018. The county saw an overall decline in the percentage of expectant mothers receiving early prenatal care, from 77 to 63 percent between 2013 and 2017. A closer look at the data by race shows that fewer than half of pregnant black and Hispanic women in Mercer County received early prenatal care.

Education. Mercer County saw a slight uptick in the high school graduation rate, from 89 to 90 percent between the 2015-16 and 2017-18 school year, but still fell below the state average of 91 percent. Mercer children also fared worse than the state in the percentage of third graders meeting or exceeding expectations on the English Language Arts PARCC exams at 48 percent compared to 52 percent. In addition, 12 percent of students in the county were chronically absent – missing 10 percent or more school days, compared to 10 percent of students statewide.

Teens and Young Adults. The percentage of teens not in school and not working, sometimes referred to as idle or disconnected youth, was 11 percent in Mercer County, the same as the state average. Mercer saw fewer juvenile admissions to county detention and fewer teen births, but an increase in STD rates. This mirrors statewide trends, though some of the increase in STD rates may be due to a greater number of teens getting tested.

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Middlesex and Somerset Continue Positive Trends in Child Well-Being, NJ Kids Count Finds

Children in Middlesex and Somerset counties continue to fare better than the rest of the state across multiple areas of child well-being, according to the NJ Kids Count County Data Dashboard, released today by Advocates for Children of New Jersey (ACNJ).

At about \$110,000 for Middlesex, and \$161,000 for families in Somerset, the median income for families with children in these counties surpassed the statewide figure of \$103,000. Children in Middlesex and Somerset County are less likely to live in poverty compared to their peers throughout the state.

“The overall progress in the state’s economic health among children and families is promising, but racial and geographic disparities in child well-being persist,” said Cecilia Zalkind, ACNJ president and CEO. “If Governor Murphy is committed to his vision of building a ‘stronger, fairer’ New Jersey, then the release of NJ Kids Count 2019 presents an opportune time to look at gaps at the community level to make sure that every child benefits from the positive gains the state is making as a whole.”

“When we use data to inform critical decisions about responding to the needs of children, everyone benefits -- children, families, our communities and our state,” Zalkind added.

The new interactive dashboard features dozens of measures of child well-being at the state and county level in the following areas: demographics, child and family economics, early care and education, child health, child protection, school children, and teens and young adults. In addition, the dashboard provides some race data by county, allowing individuals to look at equity issues in their own communities and revealing wide disparities in demographics, health, child protection and juvenile justice among children of color.

The printer-friendly Kids Count Pocket Guide is also available, featuring a selection of the indicators available on the data dashboard.

Key Trends

Demographics. New Jersey’s child population is increasingly diverse. In Middlesex, three quarters of the child population are children of color: 11 percent are black, 30 percent are

Hispanic, 26 percent are Asian and 8 percent are of some other race. In Somerset, more than 50 percent of the child population are children of color - 10 percent are black, 20 percent are Hispanic and 22 percent are Asian.

Child and Family Economics. Despite increases in the median income for families with children and low unemployment rates of less than 4 percent for both counties, over 40 percent of Middlesex and Somerset households spend more than 30 percent of their income on housing. Somerset had 4 percent of children in poverty, while Middlesex had 12 percent. Poverty is defined as earning \$25,465 for a family of four or less in 2018. Among black children and children of some other race in Middlesex County, the percentage of children living in poverty was more than double the countywide figure, at 26 and 31 percent, respectively.

Child Health. Middlesex's rate of uninsured children under age 19 decreased from 3.7 percent in 2017 to 2.1 percent in 2018. Somerset also saw fewer children without health insurance, decreasing from 2.4 to less than 1 percent.

Both counties saw a decline in the percentage of expectant mothers receiving early prenatal care between 2013 and 2017, from 85 to 74 percent in Middlesex and from 90 to 78 percent in Somerset.

Among black and Hispanic mothers in Middlesex, receipt of early prenatal care fell below the county average of 74 percent at 67 and 62 percent, respectively. In Somerset County, 64 percent of black mothers and 58 percent of Hispanic mothers received early prenatal care, compared to the county average for all mothers of 78 percent.

Education. Middlesex and Somerset students surpassed the statewide high school graduation rate of 91 percent, graduating at 92 and 94 percent, respectively, in 2017-18. Children in both counties also fared better than the state in the percentage of third graders meeting or exceeding expectations on the English Language Arts PARCC exams at 55 percent (Middlesex) and 60 percent (Somerset). Only 6 percent of Somerset students were chronically absent – missing 10 percent or more school days – compared to 9 percent of Middlesex students.

Teens and Young Adults. The percentage of teens not in school and not working, sometimes referred to as idle or disconnected youth, was 9 percent in both counties, which is lower than the state average of 11 percent. Middlesex and Somerset saw fewer admissions to county detention and fewer teen births, but an increase in STD rates. This mirrors statewide trends, though some of the increase in STD rates may be due to a greater number of teens getting tested.

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Mixed Progress in Child Well-Being for Monmouth and Ocean, NJ Kids Count County Finds

Monmouth and Ocean counties saw mixed progress across multiple areas of child well-being, according to the NJ Kids Count County Data Dashboard released today by Advocates for Children of New Jersey (ACNJ).

Ocean County's child poverty rate and unemployment rate are higher than the state average, at 16 percent and 4.3 percent, respectively. Fifty-three percent of Monmouth families and 59 percent of Ocean County households are also spending more than 30 percent of their income on housing.

"The overall progress in the state's economic health among children and families is promising, but racial and geographic disparities in child well-being persist," said Cecilia Zalkind, ACNJ president and CEO. "If Governor Murphy is committed to his vision of building a 'stronger, fairer' New Jersey, then the release of NJ Kids Count 2019 presents an opportune time to look at gaps at the community level to make sure that every child benefits from the positive gains the state is making as a whole."

"When we use data to inform critical decisions about responding to the needs of children, everyone benefits -- children, families, our communities and our state," Zalkind added.

The new interactive dashboard features dozens of measures of child well-being at the state and county level in the following areas: demographics, child and family economics, early care and education, child health, child protection, school children, and teens and young adults. In addition, the dashboard provides some race data by county, allowing individuals to look at equity issues in their own communities and revealing wide disparities in demographics, health, child protection and juvenile justice among children of color.

The printer-friendly Kids Count Pocket Guide is also available, featuring a selection of the indicators available on the data dashboard.

Key Trends

Demographics. In Monmouth, 33 percent of the child population are children of color: 8 percent are black, 18 percent are Hispanic, 5 percent are Asian and 2 percent are of some other race. In Ocean, more than 20 percent of the child population are children of color: 3 percent are black, 14 percent are Hispanic, 2 percent are Asian and 4 percent are of some other race.

Child and Family Economics. Despite increases in median income for families with children and declining unemployment rates, more than half of households in Monmouth and Ocean spend more than 30 percent of income on housing. Ten percent of Monmouth children and 16 percent of Ocean children live in poverty, compared to the statewide average of 14 percent. In both counties, more than 20 percent of Hispanic children live in poor families. Poverty is defined as earning \$25,465 for a family of four or less in 2018.

Child Health. Monmouth's rate of uninsured children under age 19 increased from 2.3 percent in 2017 to 3.3 percent in 2018. However, Ocean saw fewer children without health insurance, declining from 3.1 percent to 2.5 percent.

In 2017, 83 percent of expectant Monmouth County mothers and 77 percent of Ocean County mothers received early prenatal care. Among black and Hispanic mothers in Monmouth, receipt of early prenatal care fell below the county average at 68 and 73 percent, respectively. Prenatal health disparities persist in Ocean County as well, with fewer black, Hispanic and Asian mothers receiving prenatal care beginning in their first trimester than the countywide average.

Education. Monmouth and Ocean students outperformed the statewide high school graduation rate of 91 percent, graduating at 95 and 92 percent, respectively, in 2017-18. Monmouth fared better than the state in the percentage of third graders meeting or exceeding expectations on the English Language Arts PARCC exams at 56 percent, compared to the statewide average of 52 percent. Ocean students, however, did not, with 45 percent of third graders meeting or exceeding expectations in English Language Arts. Twelve percent of Ocean students were chronically absent – missing 10 percent or more school days, compared to 10 percent of Monmouth students.

Teens and Young Adults. The percentage of teens not in school and not working, sometimes referred to as idle or disconnected youth, was 7 percent in Monmouth and 12 percent in Ocean. The state average was 11 percent. Monmouth and Ocean saw fewer juvenile admissions to county detention and fewer teen births, but an increase in STD rates. This mirrors statewide trends, though some of the increase in STD rates may be due to a greater number of teens getting tested.

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Kids Count is a national and state-by-state statistical effort to track the state of children, sponsored by the Annie E. Casey Foundation. Advocates for Children of New Jersey is a statewide child research and action organization and the New Jersey Kids Count grantee.

NEWS



Morris County Continues Positive Trends in Child Well-Being, NJ Kids Count Finds

With a median income for families with children of more than \$153,000 and an unemployment rate of 3.3 percent, Morris County surpasses statewide figures when it comes to their children's economic stability, health, education, and safety and well-being, according to the NJ Kids Count County Data Dashboard, released today by Advocates for Children of New Jersey (ACNJ).

However, racial disparities persist. Roughly 70 percent of black mothers and 65 percent of Hispanic mothers received early prenatal care, compared to the county average of 83 percent. Overall, fewer expectant mothers in Morris County received prenatal care beginning in their first trimester, dropping from 92 percent in 2013 to 83 percent in 2017.

"The overall progress in the state's economic health among children and families is promising, but racial and geographic disparities in child well-being persist," said Cecilia Zalkind, ACNJ president and CEO. "If Governor Murphy is committed to his vision of building a 'stronger, fairer' New Jersey, then the release of NJ Kids Count 2019 presents an opportune time to look at gaps at the community level to make sure that every child benefits from the positive gains the state is making as a whole."

The new interactive dashboard features dozens of measures of child well-being at the state and county level in the following areas: demographics, child and family economics, early care and education, child health, child protection, school children, and teens and young adults. In addition, the dashboard provides some race data by county, allowing individuals to look at equity issues in their own communities and revealing wide disparities in demographics, health, child protection and juvenile justice among children of color.

The printer-friendly Kids Count Pocket Guide is also available, featuring a selection of the indicators available on the data dashboard.

Key Trends

Demographics. New Jersey's child population is increasingly diverse. In Morris, more than 30 percent of the child population are children of color: 4 percent are black, 18 percent are Hispanic and 11 percent are Asian.

Child and Family Economics. Forty percent of Morris households spend more than 30 percent of their income on housing. The county saw a slight uptick in the percentage of children in poverty, up from 5 percent in 2014 to 6 percent in 2018. The statewide average for children

living in poverty is 14 percent. Poverty is defined as earning \$25,465 for a family of four or less in 2018.

Child Health. Morris saw more children without health insurance than the prior year, increasing from 1.5 to 2.7 percent between 2017 and 2018. There was also a decline in the percentage of expectant mothers receiving early prenatal care between 2013 and 2017, from 92 to 83 percent.

Education. Morris surpassed the statewide high school graduation rate of 91 percent, graduating at 95 percent, in 2017-2018. The county also fared better than the state in third grade English Language Arts PARCC exams, with 65 percent meeting or exceeding expectations. Only 6 percent of Morris students were chronically absent – missing 10 percent or more school days – compared to the state average of 10 percent.

Teens and Young Adults. The percentage of teens not in school and not working, sometimes referred to as idle or disconnected youth, was 6 percent in Morris, which is lower than the state average of 11 percent. The county also saw a slight decrease in teen births, but an increase in STD rates. This mirrors statewide trends, though some of the increase in STD rates may be due to a greater number of teens getting tested.

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NEWS



Mixed Progress in Child Well-Being for Union County, NJ Kids Count County Finds

Children in Union County kept pace with state trends in child well-being, according to the NJ Kids Count County Data Dashboard released today by Advocates for Children of New Jersey (ACNJ). At about \$98,000, the median income for families with children in Union County is close to the statewide figure of \$103,000. Unemployment is down and fewer Union County children are living in poverty at 9 percent, compared to 14 percent for New Jersey.

The [new interactive dashboard](#) features dozens of measures of child well-being at the state and county level in the following areas: demographics, child and family economics, early care and education, child health, child protection, school children, and teens and young adults. In addition, the dashboard provides some race data by county, allowing individuals to look at equity issues in their own communities and revealing wide disparities in demographics, health, child protection and juvenile justice among children of color.

The printer-friendly Kids Count Pocket Guide is also available, featuring a selection of the indicators available on the data dashboard.

“Giving children the best start in life means also ensuring that they have strong supports,” said Cecilia Zalkind, ACNJ president and CEO. “The overall progress in the county’s economic health among children and families is promising, but there is also room for improvement. Fewer mothers are receiving early prenatal care during the critical first trimester than several years ago, a concerning trend.”

Key Trends

Child Health. Union County has seen a decline in the percentage of babies born with low birthweight, falling to 6.8 percent, below the state average 8 percent. More children were also being tested for lead compared to the rest of the state. In 2017, 35 percent of children under age 6 were tested for lead, a 6 percent jump from 2013. During the same time period, fewer mothers received early prenatal care, declining from 80 to 68 percent. The state average was 75 percent.

Early Care and Education. In Union County, 73 percent of children ages 0-5 have all parents in the labor force. At the same time, child care costs are \$240 per week for infants and \$238 for toddlers, not far from the state average of \$250 and \$228, respectively.

Education. Union third grade students fared slightly worse than the state in the percentage meeting or exceeding expectations on the English Language Arts PARCC exams at 50 percent compared to 52 percent.

Teens and Young Adults. Union County saw fewer admissions to juvenile county detention and fewer births to teens. However, between 2014 and 2018, Union County saw a 31 percent increase in the rate of teens diagnosed with chlamydia, gonorrhea and syphilis. This mirrors statewide trends, though some of the increase in STD rates may be due to a greater number of teens getting tested.

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NEWS



NJ Kids Count County Finds Continuing Positive Trends for Children in Sussex and Warren

Children in Sussex and Warren counties continue to fare better than the rest of the state across multiple areas of child well-being, according to the NJ Kids Count County Data Dashboard released today by Advocates for Children of New Jersey (ACNJ). At about \$109,000 for Warren, and \$111,000 for families in Sussex, the median incomes for families with children in these counties surpassed the statewide figure of \$103,000. Children in Sussex and Warren County are less likely to live in poverty compared to their peers throughout the state.

The new interactive dashboard features dozens of measures of child well-being at the state and county level in the following areas: demographics, child and family economics, early care and education, child health, child protection, school children, and teens and young adults. In addition, the dashboard provides some race data by county, allowing individuals to look at equity issues in their own communities and revealing wide disparities in demographics, health, child protection and juvenile justice among children of color.

“Giving children the best start in life means also ensuring that they have strong supports,” said Cecilia Zalkind, ACNJ president and CEO. “Although the data is mostly positive, a closer look reveals not every child has an equal opportunity to thrive. For example, in Warren County, 3.4 percent of children under age six who have been tested for lead have blood lead levels above five micrograms per deciliter, higher than the state average of 2.8 percent. Nearly half of Sussex County households spend 30 percent or more of their income on rent.”

The printer-friendly Kids Count Pocket Guide is also available, featuring a selection of the indicators available on the data dashboard.

“If Governor Murphy is committed to his vision of building a ‘stronger, fairer’ New Jersey, the release of NJ Kids Count 2019 is an opportune time to look at these gaps at the community level to make sure that every child benefits from the positive gains the state is making as a whole,” Zalkind added. “When we use data to inform critical decisions about responding to the needs of children, everyone benefits -- children, families, our communities and our state.”

Key Trends

Child Health. In 2017, Sussex saw fewer babies born with a low birthweight at 5.9 percent compared to the state average of 8 percent, and Warren County was slightly above the state

average at 8.3 percent. Sussex County did see a decline in the number of women receiving prenatal care since 2013, but the figure was still above the state average of 75 percent. Both counties saw fewer children under age six tested for lead, decreasing from 12 to 10 percent in Sussex and 15 to 14 percent between 2013 to 2017.

Education. Sussex and Warren surpassed the statewide high school graduation rate of 91 percent, graduating at 95 and 93 percent, respectively, in 2017-18. Children in both counties also fared better than the state in the percentage of seventh graders meeting or exceeding expectations in both the English Language Arts and Math PARCC exams. Participation in school breakfast among low income students also grew, but was below the state average of 57 percent. In Sussex County, school breakfast reached 31 percent of eligible students and in Warren, that figure was 46 percent.

Teens and Young Adults. The percentage of teens not in school and not working, sometimes referred to as idle or disconnected youth was 9 percent in Sussex and 13 percent in Warren. The statewide average was 11 percent. Both counties saw fewer juvenile arrests in 2016 and fewer teen births in 2017. Warren County experienced a decline in STD rates between 2014 and 2018, while Sussex County's STD rates grew. This increase mirrors statewide trends, though some of the increase in STD rates may be due to a greater number of teens getting tested.

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