Save the Children®

GROWING UP RURAL IN AMERICA

U.S. COMPLEMENT TO THE
END OF CHILDHOOD REPORT 2018

Preston, 2, California

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501 Kings Highway East, Suite 400
Fairfield, Connecticut 06825
United States
(800) 728-3843
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Photo: Tamar Levine for Save the Children

Growing Up Rural in America

Across America, the experiences shaping children's lives are starkly different. Many children are getting the daily opportunities to learn and develop that they need, as well as an abundance of healthy food on their tables, and regular chances to play safely and grow their imaginations. But for far too many other children, families and communities are struggling to provide them the childhoods they deserve, and our next generation is not nearly prepared to succeed in life.

This is too often the reality for children living in rural America's poverty-stricken pockets. From the hills and hollers of Appalachia in the east, to the Deep South, all the way to California's distressed Central Valley and beyond, children are more likely to experience childhood ender events. They face higher infant mortality rates, lack essential educational resources and proper access to health care, miss out on nutritious meals, experience higher teen pregnancy rates, and are caught in the crippling opioid crisis, among many other adverse childhood experiences.

Poverty affects hundreds of millions of children worldwide, including millions in the U.S., and when you shine a light on where poverty has the strongest grip on children's lives in America, it's most often in our wide open spaces. In 41 of America's 47 states with rural designated areas, rural child poverty is higher than in urban areas.[1] Rural poverty rates have also remained persistently high and deeply pervasive for at least three generations, since the government began measuring them at the start of the War on Poverty in the mid 1960s.

ABOUT THE 2018 OF END CHILDHOOD REPORT

In commemoration of International Children's Day, Save the Children releases its second annual *End of Childhood Report*, which examines some of the reasons why children around the world are missing out on childhood.

The report includes a unique *End of Childhood Index* that evaluates countries against a common set of life-changing events that signal this disruption of childhood. Compared to last year, the index finds the overall situation for children appears more favorable in 95 of 175 countries. This is welcome news – and it shows that investments and policies are working to lift up many of our children. But the index also shows progress is not happening fast enough and conditions appear considerably worse in about 40 countries.[2]

Poverty, conflict and discrimination against girls are putting more than 1.2 billion children – over half of children around the globe – at risk for an early end to their childhood. Many of these at-risk children live in countries facing two or three of these grave threats at the same time. In fact, 153 million children worldwide are at extreme risk of missing out on the childhood they deserve because they live in countries characterized by all three threats.[3]

In this year's analysis, the United States ranks 36th, between Belarus and Russia.[4] While the country's overall score increased by four points since last year's *End of Childhood Report*,[5] progress is slow and conditions remain troubling for America's kids.

This supplemental report looks specifically at some of the major reasons why childhoods are ending too soon in America, as measured by five childhood enders.

CHILDHOOD ENDERS

ENDER	INDICATOR
Child dies	Infant mortality rate
Child is malnourished	Child food insecurity rate
Child drops out of school	Rate of children not graduating from high school on time
Child is a victim of violence	Child homicide and suicide rate
Child has a child	Adolescent birth rate

Downtown Shelby, Mississippi on a spring day in 2018. One hundred years ago, Shelby was one of the wealthiest cities per capita in the Delta.

Photo: Sara Neumann, Save the Children

Defining Rural

Rural child poverty[6] in the United States is a subject that is rarely discussed in today's national conversation, but given the findings of the new research in this report, it should be. According to this first-of-its-kind analysis of rural child poverty rates across America, rural child poverty is much more pervasive than one might think. Deeply embedded in any discussion of rural poverty is the question: "What makes an area *rural*?" There are two methods of defining what constitutes a rural area.

The first method, used by the U.S. Census Bureau, defines rural as "encompassing all population, housing and territory not included within an urban area." This definition creates a dependency for rural areas on the definition of urban areas. As of 2010, the Census Bureau defines urban and rural as follows: **Urbanized Areas**, areas of 50,000 or more people; **Urban Clusters**, areas with populations from 2,500 to 49,999; **Rural**, open countryside and places with fewer than 2,500 people.

The second method creates a separate set of terms often used in place of urban and rural – "metropolitan" and "nonmetropolitan." This is a classification of counties defined by the U.S. Office of Management and Budget (OMB). Metropolitan or metro areas are broad labor-market areas that include central counties with one or more urbanized areas, meaning an area of 50,000 or more people that includes outlying counties which are economically tied to the central county. Nonmetropolitan or nonmetro areas are everything else – open countryside, rural towns with fewer than 2,500 people and urban clusters with populations ranging from 2,500 to 49,000 people that are not part of a larger metro area.

For this analysis, we have employed the second method of rural and urban categorization. The use of "urban" refers to metropolitan areas and "rural" refers to nonmetropolitan areas. The terms "rural" and "nonmetro" are used interchangeably as are the terms "urban" and "metro." We've used the latest estimates from the 2016 American Community Survey to explore child poverty in these areas.[7]

It's important to note that many U.S. government agencies, including the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Economic Research Service, use "metro" and "nonmetro" in their publications focused on rural America because these definitions are more robust in their ability to uncover trends and policy responses.[8]

Photo: Sara Neumann, Save the Children

NATIONAL LEVEL FINDINGS

In 2016, an estimated 14.1 million children under the age of 18 lived in poverty across America.[9] At a rate of 19.5 percent, child poverty in America is higher than almost all other high-income Organization for Economic Co-Operation and Development (OECD) countries.[10] Children in the United States are at least twice as likely to be poor as children in Norway, Iceland, Slovenia, Ireland, Sweden and Germany, and more than five times as likely to be poor as children in Denmark and Finland. Growing up in poverty is one of the greatest threats to healthy child development. When young children grow up in poverty, they are at higher risk of experiencing difficulties later in life – having poor physical and mental health, becoming teen parents, dropping out of school and facing limited employment opportunities.[11]

14.1 Million Children Growing Up in Poverty – Who Are They?

URBAN VS. RURAL
In absolute numbers, 11.8 million are urban; 2.3 million are rural

GEOGRAPHY
6.1 million live in the South; 3.2 million live in the West; 2.7 million live in the Midwest; 2.0 million live in the Northeast

AGES
4.9 million are aged 0-5; 4.9 million are 6 to 11; 4.2 million are 12 to 17

GENDER
7.2 million are boys; 6.9 million are girls

FAMILY COMPOSITION
8.1 million are children of single mothers; 4.5 million live in married couple families; 2.1 million are children of single fathers

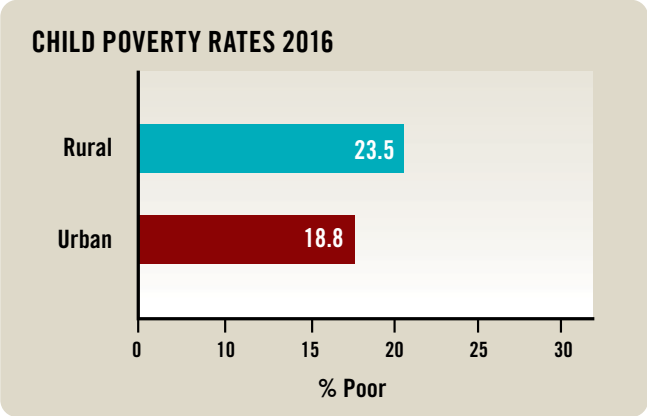
RACE
5.1 million are Hispanic or Latino; 4.3 million are White; 3.5 million are Black or African American; 410,000 are Asian; 240,000 are Native American and Alaskan Natives

DISABILITY
890,000 are children with disabilities

Source: Save the Children's analysis of data from U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2016. Estimates were derived from American Fact Finder Tables B17006, B17020, B17020B, B17020C, B17020D, B17020H, B17020I, B18130 and C17001 (factfinder2.census.gov).

10 THINGS YOU DIDN'T KNOW ABOUT KIDS IN RURAL AMERICA

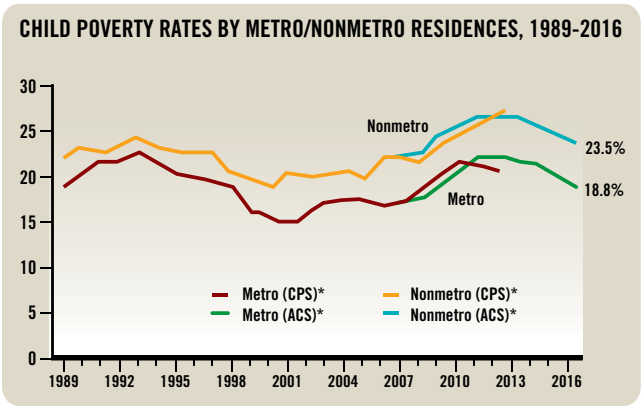
1. **Child poverty rates are higher in rural areas – nearly 1 in 4 rural children grow up in poverty.** Many Americans think child poverty is just an urban issue. But in 2016, 23.5 percent of children in rural areas were impoverished as compared to 18.8 percent in urban areas. On the county level, between 2012 and 2016, 41 counties in the United States had child poverty rates of 50 percent or higher, 93 percent of which (38 out of 41) were rural.[12]



Note: Urban and rural are defined by metropolitan and nonmetropolitan area definitions.
Source: Save the Children's analysis of data from U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2016. Estimates were derived from American Fact Finder Table B17020 (factfinder2.census.gov).

2. **In the most rural of rural areas, child poverty rates are even higher.** Child poverty rates are 19 percent in urban areas with populations of 50,000 or more, 23 percent in rural areas with populations of 10,000-49,999, and 25 percent in rural areas with fewer than 10,000 people.[13]

3. **Childhood poverty rates have been persistently high in rural areas – for at least three generations – and since the start of the War on Poverty.** Historically, there has been a sharp difference between the levels of rural and urban child poverty, with rural rates consistently higher. Rural poverty can be attributed to poor access to employment opportunities, low educational attainment and other factors.[14]

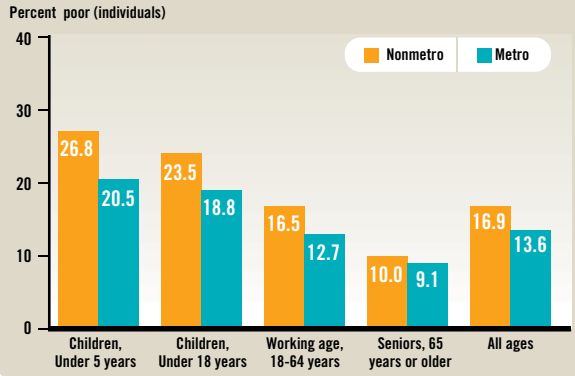


Note: Metro status of some countries changed in 1984,1994, 2004, and 2014.
Source: USDA, Economic Research Service using data from the U.S. Census Bureau's Current Population Survey (CPS) 1990-2013 and annual American Community Survey (ACS) estimates for 2007-16.
*CPS poverty status is based on family income in prior year and ACS poverty status is based on family income in past 12 months.

4. **Rural children were disproportionality affected by the recession.** The 2007-09 recession and subsequent slow recovery resulted in substantial increases in poverty, especially among rural children. Rural child poverty rates peaked at over 26 percent in 2011-12, years after the end of the recession. Although rural child poverty rates have declined in recent years, they remain significantly higher than they were in the early 2000s, and recovery in rural areas has been slower than in urban areas. Rising income inequality, rather than a decline in average income, explains the rise in child poverty.[15]

5. **Children are more vulnerable to poverty than adults are.** In rural areas, nearly 1 in 4 children live in poverty (24 percent) compared to 1 in 6 working age adults (17 percent) and 1 in 10 seniors (10 percent).[16]

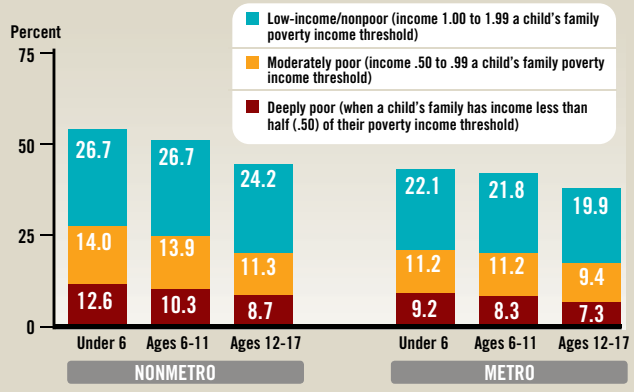
POVERTY RATES BY AGE GROUP AND METRO/NONMETRO RESIDENCE, 2016



Source: USDA, Economic Research Service using data from the U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2016.

6. **Children under 6 years of age are the most vulnerable to rural poverty.** Across rural America, children ages 0 to 5 have a poverty rate of 27 percent. This is compared to 24 percent of children ages 6 to 11 living in poverty and 20 percent of children ages 12 to 17. Young children in rural areas also face 1.5 times the rate of deep poverty as their non-rural peers, 13 percent versus 9 percent. Deep poverty means a child's family has an income below half of the federal poverty line. This is especially concerning because deep, pervasive poverty often leads to long-lasting developmental and health problems, further perpetuating the cycle.[17]

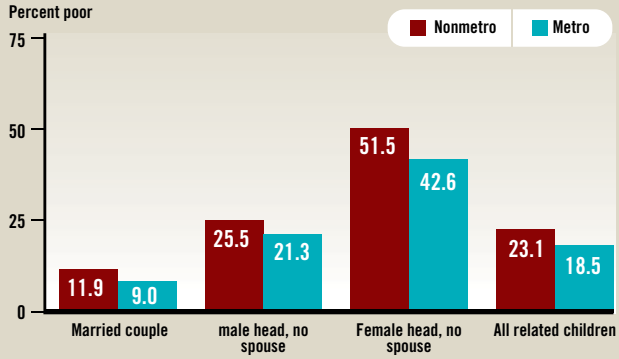
CHILDREN BY AGE, POVERTY STATUS, AND METRO/NONMETRO RESIDENCE, 2016



Note: Children are defined as all persons under 18 years old. Nonmetro/metro status is based on 2013 Office of Management and Budget designations. Source: USDA, Economic Research Service using data from the U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2016.

7. **Poverty rates are highest for children in single parent families, especially those with single mothers.** Scarcity of jobs, geographic isolation and lack of employment opportunities and transportation often pose greater earnings challenges for rural parents than urban parents.[18] Rural parents also tend to have less education and a higher incidence of underemployment, which places their children at higher risk for poverty. In rural America, half of all children living with single mothers are impoverished (51.5 percent) as compared to 11.9 percent of rural children in married-couple families. This means that children of single mothers in rural areas are four times as likely to live in poverty as their peers with both parents at home.

CHILD POVERTY BY FAMILY TYPE AND METRO/NONMETRO RESIDENCE, 2016



Note: Related children are defined as any child under 18 years old who is related to the householder by birth, marriage, or adoption. Nonmetro/metro status is based on 2013 Office of Management and Budget designations.
Source: USDA, Economic Research Service using data from U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2016.

8. **Most poor rural children are white, but rural poverty rates are highest among black children.** Over half of all poor rural children – 1.3 of 2.3 million – are white, but rural poverty rates of African American children are nearly 50 percent. Racial poverty gaps are much larger in rural areas than in urban ones. In 2016, nearly 1 out of every 2 rural African American children, or 47.3 percent, were poor as compared to 1 in 5 rural white children, or 19.7 percent.[19]

9. **Disabled children are disproportionately poor.** Nationally, 29 percent of disabled children are poor, compared to 19 percent of non-disabled children. In rural areas, poverty rates among disabled children climb to 35 percent. In other words, over one-third of disabled children in rural areas are growing up poor.[20]

10. **Certain geographic areas of America, including the Mississippi Delta, the Southwest, Central Valley and Appalachia, have the highest rates of persistent child poverty and are mostly rural.** The vast majority of poor, rural African American children live in the South, where child poverty rates are historically the highest. Native American children, whose poverty is concentrated in the Southwest and Northern Plains, and Alaskan native children have the second highest rural poverty rate at 39.3 percent. One-third of rural Hispanic children are poor; their poverty is concentrated in the South and West. Poor rural white children, in comparison, tend to be spread across Appalachia.[21]

WHAT'S IT LIKE GROWING UP POOR IN RURAL AMERICA?

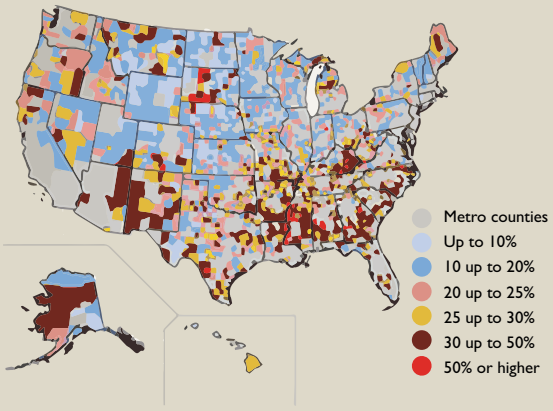
The impact of child poverty unfolds over the course of a lifetime. Research has linked child poverty in rural areas to low levels of well-being during both childhood and adulthood, encompassing poor educational, economic, behavioral and health outcomes. Although the poorest rural children are the most disadvantaged, rural children overall face greater threats than their urban peers, regardless of economic status.

In comparison to their urban counterparts, rural children are more likely to have younger and less educated parents who, in turn, are more likely to be poor. They are more likely to receive government assistance, like SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program), disability checks or free or reduced-price school lunches, in part due to higher poverty rates. They are also less likely to be insured, despite the availability of government health insurance programs for children in low-income families.

As a result, rural children are less likely to receive medical care when they need it. Poor rural children are at even greater risk of having unmet medical needs, delayed medical care and no consistent pediatrician or clinic to visit.

Children in rural areas tend to have lower levels of educational attainment, too. Compared to their urban counterparts, they are far less likely to complete college. This is especially true for racial and ethnic minorities in rural America, who are only half as likely as rural whites to have a college degree. Once they reach adulthood, rural children, especially the poor, can expect lower earnings, higher unemployment rates and higher poverty rates for themselves and their children – even with the same level of educational attainment.[22]

CHILD POVERTY RATES IN RURAL COUNTIES, 2012-2016 AVERAGE



Note: Rural (nonmetro) status determined by the 2013 metropolitan area designations from the Office of Management and Budget.
Source: USDA, Economic Research Service using data from the U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2015.

STATE-BY-STATE ANALYSIS: GROWING UP RURAL

Poverty is a major threat to children worldwide and, as part of this year's *End of Childhood Report*, Save the Children has evaluated child poverty data in both urban and rural areas across America.

Pockets of rural child poverty exist in almost every state. Examining child poverty at a county level offers a deeper understanding of state level poverty data. Without including states that don't geographically qualify as having a rural region, including Delaware, New Jersey and Rhode Island, as well as the District of Columbia, almost every state in the nation is home to at least one county with high rates of rural child poverty, at or above 30 percent. Even North Dakota, the state that has the fourth lowest rate of rural child poverty overall, has counties where child poverty is estimated to be between 30 and 50 percent. Counties with the highest rural child poverty rates are mostly clustered in Appalachia, the Mississippi Delta and on Native American reservations.[23]

Thirty eight of our nation's 41 counties with child poverty rates at or above 50 percent, defined as "severe poverty," are rural. The most severe poverty is found in rural communities heavily clustered in the South, where more than three-quarters of relentlessly impoverished counties (31 of 38) are located. Mississippi alone is home to 13 rural counties with severe poverty, mainly in the Delta region. Severe rates of rural poverty are also found in Georgia, Louisiana and South Dakota, where, in some counties, two-thirds or more of rural children live in poverty.[24]

RURAL POVERTY TRENDS

- **Arizona has the highest rate of rural child poverty: 36 percent.** In the Southwest, Arizona and New Mexico, along with four states in the Southeast – Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi and South Carolina – have rural child poverty rates at or above 33 percent. This means 1 in 3 rural children in these states are growing up in poverty. That's about three times the rate found in Connecticut, Massachusetts and New Hampshire, this year's best-ranked states as it relates to rural child poverty rates.

- **8 out of 10 states with the highest rates of rural child poverty are in the Southeast.** Although Arizona has the highest rural child poverty rate, the Southeast is the region where rural child poverty is most pervasive. This part of the country encompasses several particularly impoverished sub-regions, including Appalachia and the Mississippi Delta.

- **Connecticut has the lowest rate of rural child poverty: 8 percent.** Connecticut is the only state in the nation where **fewer than 1 in 10 rural children live in poverty.** It is followed by New Hampshire, Massachusetts, North Dakota and Wyoming, all of which have rural child poverty rates below 12 percent.

- **Rural child poverty rates exceed urban poverty rates in 40 of 47 states with available data.** Only Connecticut, Indiana, Massachusetts, Nevada, North Dakota, Ohio and Wisconsin have more urban child poverty than rural child poverty. However, in most of these states, the urban and rural child poverty rates are similar. The difference is less than two percentage points, with the exception of Connecticut and Massachusetts.

- **The greatest urban-rural poverty gaps are in Alaska and Vermont.** Rural children are twice as likely to be poor as compared to their urban peers in these two states. Poverty gaps in Maryland, New Hampshire and Virginia are nearly as large, meaning rural children are 1.8 to 1.9 times as likely as urban children to be poor.

- **States with high rates of rural child poverty tend to also have high rates of urban child poverty.** All states with rural child poverty rates over 25 percent also have urban poverty rates above 20 percent. Four of the top 5 states with the highest rural child poverty rates are also among the top five states with the highest urban child poverty rates: Arizona, Louisiana, Mississippi and New Mexico. Although Washington, D.C. wasn't included in this analysis because it does not have a rural county designation, it has the third highest urban child poverty rate in the nation, at 25.8 percent, behind New Mexico (28.1 percent) and Louisiana (27.3 percent).

One of many farms in Ixonia, Wisconsin, where child poverty rates tripled from 2000 to 2014.

Photo: Sara Neumann, Save the Children

A dusty basketball court in California's Central Valley, where the child poverty rate is upward of 40 percent.

Photo: Tamar Levine for Save the Children

Child Poverty Rates in America

In a first-of-its-kind comparison of rural and urban child poverty rates across America, Save the Children finds that rural child poverty rates are higher than urban in 85 percent of states. The greatest absolute gap between rural and urban poverty rates is in South Carolina, where nearly 15 percentage points separate rural and urban children – 35.2 percent of children grow up in poverty in rural areas in that state, as compared to 20.8 percent in urban settings.

CHILD POVERTY (AGES 0-17) RATES IN RURAL AND URBAN AREAS, BY STATE, 2016

RANK	STATE	RURAL CHILD POVERTY RATE	URBAN CHILD POVERTY RATE
1	Connecticut	7.8%	13.1%
2	Massachusetts	10.7%	13.6%
3	New Hampshire	11.2%	6.1%
4	North Dakota	11.7%	13.3%
5	Wyoming	11.9%	9.2%
6	Hawaii	13.1%	9.4%
7	Minnesota	14.7%	12.1%
8	Wisconsin	15.0%	16.0%
9	Iowa	15.2%	14.5%
10	Nebraska	15.7%	13.4%
11	Kansas	16.2%	13.1%
12	Montana	16.5%	12.5%
13	Colorado	16.7%	12.9%
14	Utah	16.8%	10.4%
15	Nevada	17.7%	19.2%
16	Vermont	18.1%	8.8%
17	Indiana	18.8%	19.7%
18	Ohio	19.0%	20.9%
19	South Dakota	19.1%	14.5%
20	Illinois	19.7%	17.5%
21	Pennsylvania	19.8%	18.4%
22	Idaho	20.3%	16.4%
23	Michigan	20.8%	20.7%
24	Oregon	21.6%	16.1%
24	Washington	21.6%	12.9%
26	California	21.8%	19.9%
27	Alaska	22.0%	10.3%
28	New York	22.5%	20.5%
29	Maine	22.8%	13.5%
30	Virginia	23.7%	13.1%
31	Maryland	23.8%	12.5%
32	Missouri	24.7%	17.4%
33	Oklahoma	25.4%	21.8%
34	West Virginia	25.8%	22.9%
35	Texas	26.2%	22.0%
36	Tennessee	26.8%	21.5%
37	Arkansas	27.1%	21.9%
38	North Carolina	27.6%	20.1%
39	Florida	28.5%	20.8%
40	Kentucky	31.2%	20.9%
41	Alabama	31.7%	22.3%
42	Georgia	33.0%	21.0%
43	New Mexico	34.0%	28.1%
44	Mississippi	34.4%	24.4%
45	Louisiana	35.1%	27.3%
46	South Carolina	35.2%	20.8%
47	Arizona	36.2%	22.8%
**	New Jersey	**	14.6%
**	Rhode Island	**	17.0%
**	Delaware	**	17.4%
**	District of Columbia	**	25.8%

Items in blue indicate states with higher rates of child poverty in rural versus urban settings

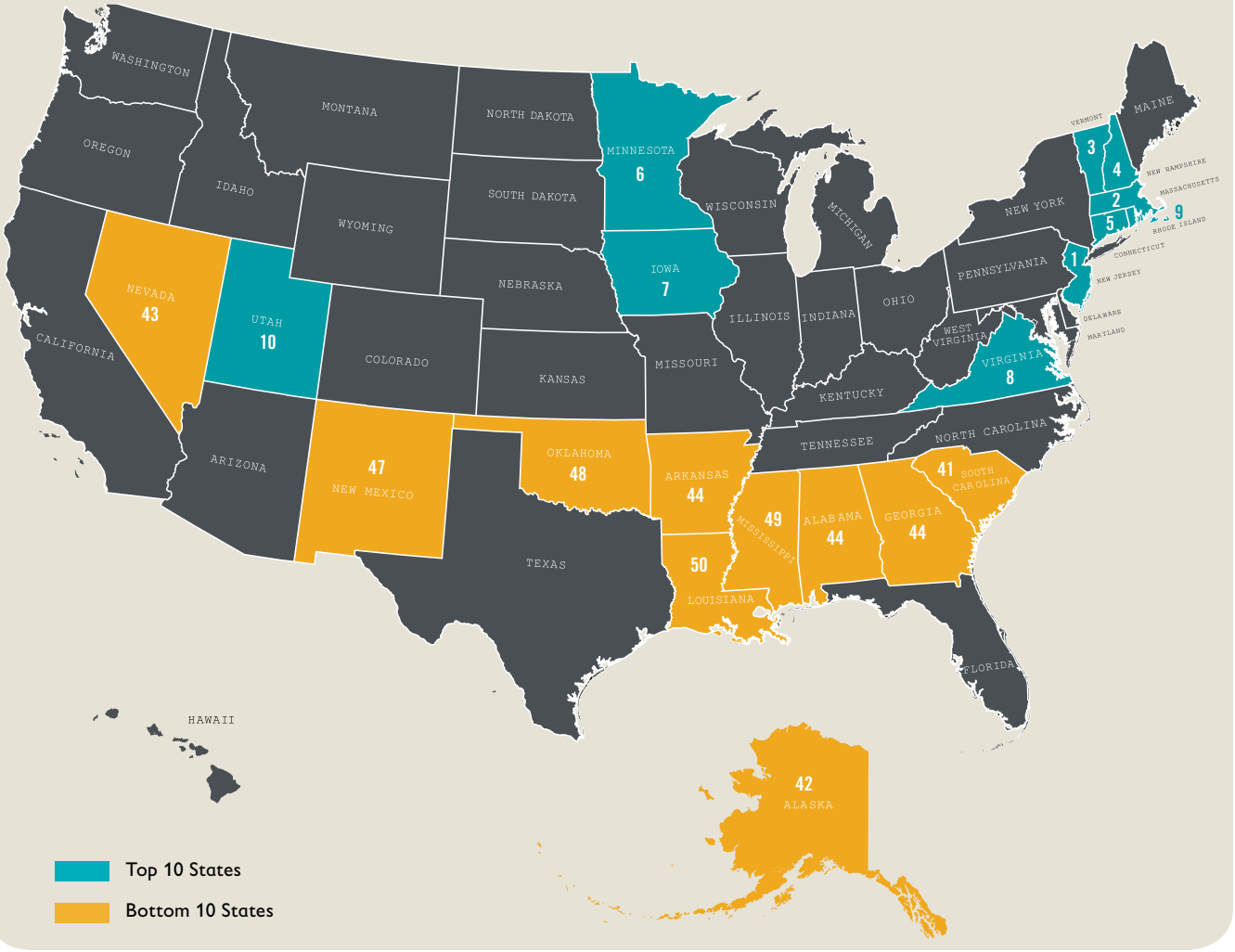
Note: Rural data reflect child poverty rates in nonmetropolitan areas; urban data reflect child poverty rates in metropolitan areas. Source: Calculations by Save the Children based on data from the U.S. Census Bureau 2016 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates, American Fact Finder: Table B17020, "Poverty Status in the Past 12 Months of All Children Under 18 Years by Family Type by Age of All Children Under 18 Years."

**Delaware, District of Columbia, New Jersey and Rhode Island do not have child poverty data for rural areas; they have no rural counties.

Millions Missing Out on Childhood

Save the Children's second annual End of Childhood State Ranking reveals children in New Jersey, Massachusetts, Vermont and New Hampshire are far more likely to experience safe, secure and healthy childhoods than children in Louisiana, Mississippi, Oklahoma and New Mexico. Each state's rank was determined by averaging its ranking for the five childhood enders considered in this analysis.

WHERE CHILDHOOD IS MOST AND LEAST THREATENED



2018 FINDINGS

- New Hampshire loses the number one spot to New Jersey and drops to 4th best in the ranking. New Hampshire slid down the violence and high school drop out state rankings, while New Jersey was the only state that placed in the top six on all five indicators.
- Nine out of the top 10 states remained the same from last year's ranking. Utah broke into the top 10, rising from 16 to 10, while Wisconsin fell out of the top, moving from 9 to 13. Utah's growth was in part due to incredible progress made in the area of violence against children. Wisconsin dropped in ranking because of increases in infant mortality and adolescent pregnancy.
- Similarly, nine out of the bottom 10 states remained the same from last year's ranking, but Arizona left the group and South Carolina joined it. Mississippi and Louisiana remain in the bottom two positions, 49 and 50, for the second year in a row.
- 40 states have different ranks this year, but two-thirds or 68 percent, moved only one or two spots.
- The state that made the most progress in this year's ranking was South Dakota, rising nine spots from 39 to 30 overall. This rise can be attributed to the state's extremely positive leap from 41 to 9 in infant mortality. Arizona, Utah and Washington also moved up the ranking by five or more positions.
- Montana showed the largest drop from last year's ranking, falling from 31 to 36. This decline can be attributed in part to the state's failure to improve on any of the indicator rankings. Other notable drops include Idaho, Kentucky and Wisconsin, which all fell four spots.
- States in the top 10 are predominately located in the Northeast, while states in the bottom 10 are predominately in the Southeast. While this is true for the overall *End of Childhood State Ranking*, not every indicator maintains the same regional pattern.

See the complete 2018 End of Childhood State Ranking and an explanation of the methodology, beginning on page 26.

Brayleigh, 18 months, Kentucky
Photo: Ellery Lamm, Save the Children

Stolen Childhoods Across America – By The Numbers*

12.9 million children – approximately 1 out of every 7 – lived in food insecure households in 2015, and 703,000 children lived in households experiencing very low food security.[25] This is significantly more than reported in 2014.[26]

Some 707,000 teens aged 16-19 were not in school and not high school graduates in 2016.[27] This means more teenagers graduated high school than in 2015.[28]

209,809 babies were born to girls aged 15 to 19 in the U.S. in 2016.[29] This is approximately 20,000 fewer babies born to teenagers than in 2015.[30]

23,161 babies died before their first birthday in 2016.[31] This is a slight improvement in infant mortality as compared to 2015, but more than 63 babies die each day in America.[32]

Roughly 5,300 children were killed or committed suicide in 2016.[33] More children have died because of extreme violence than in 2015.[34]

**Children often experience more than one childhood ender. See Methodology and Research Notes for details.*

Infant Mortality Rates Higher in Rural America

In 2016, nearly 4 million babies were born in the United States – 3,945,875 live births, to be exact. And sadly, 23,161 died before their first birthday.[35] Infant death rates are highest in rural areas and lowest in large urban centers. A recent study from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention found that infant mortality rates decrease as urbanization levels increase. In 2014, infant mortality in rural counties was 20 percent higher than in large urban counties – rates were 6.55 and 5.44 deaths per 1,000 live births respectively.[36]

In rural areas, black babies are at least twice as likely to die before their first birthday as white or Hispanic babies, but the rural-urban gap is greatest among non-Hispanic whites. Infant mortality rates among white mothers in rural counties are 40 percent higher than those of white mothers in large urban centers.[37]

Alabama and Mississippi have the highest infant mortality rates, with rates of 9.1 and 8.6 deaths per 1,000 live births. Children in these states are twice as likely to die in their first year as babies in the top five states with the lowest infant mortality rates.

Evidence shows differences in infant mortality rates across urban and rural settings could be related to differences in maternal conditions during pregnancy, including poverty, health and lifestyle choices and access to health care services.

In order to reduce infant deaths, these findings suggest states need to address racial and ethnic disparities disadvantaging black children in both rural and urban areas. Further, solutions must be highly contextualized to address the differences in direct and underlying causes of infant death in urban and rural areas. No baby should die from a preventable cause.

Michaela and her son Liam, 7 months, Arkansas

Photo: Eli Murray for Save the Children

Counties with Highest Food-Insecurity Rates are Largely Rural

Child food insecurity rates across America remain very high, with 14 percent of U.S. children – 12.9 million – living in households that struggled to put healthy food on the table in 2015. And 703,000 American children live in households with severe food insecurity, regularly going hungry or missing a meal.

Kids living with food insecurity are more likely to be in poor health, with higher rates of cardiovascular disease, high blood pressure, diabetes, and other physical and mental health conditions in adulthood – which lead to higher health care expenses.

Fewer U.S. children are struggling with hunger, but children in every county across America remain at risk. Even in North Dakota, the state that did the best at ensuring children have access to adequate and nutritious foods in 2015, 1 in 11 children live in food-insecure households. In Arkansas, Mississippi and New Mexico, at least 1 in 4 children are food insecure.

In the highest child food insecure counties, 2 in 5 children, or 41 percent live in poverty, as compared to 1 in 5, or 23 percent, nationally. Those counties also tend to have low income levels and high unemployment rates, which suggests many children are not being reached by federal assistance. What's more, an estimated 1 in 5 food insecure children are living in households that don't qualify for government food programs.

Child food insecurity is more pervasive in poor and rural areas. Not surprisingly, counties with the largest number of food insecure children are urban, with Los Angeles, New York City and Houston counties claiming the top three spots. However, counties with the highest rates of child food insecurity tend to be rural. Nearly 90 percent of counties with high child food insecurity rates are classified as rural.

A cornerstore in the Mississippi Delta.

Photo: Sara Neumann, Save the Children

Rural Children are Less Likely to Go to College

In 2016, some 707,000 teenagers aged 16 to 19 were not in school and also had not achieved a key milestone in childhood: high school graduation.[38] Less than one-third (29 percent) of rural Americans aged 18-24 are enrolled in higher education, compared to nearly half of all youth in cities (48 percent).[39]

According to the *2017 Building a Grad Nation Annual Update*, the nation needs to nearly double its rate of progress in boosting high school graduation rates in the coming years in order to reach its 90 percent goal by the Class of 2020. The national high school graduation rate for the class of 2016 was 84.1 percent.[40]

For the second year in a row, Iowa is the state with the highest high school graduation rate. Only 8.7 percent of students do not graduate on time. New Mexico, Nevada and Oregon remain in the bottom three, although each state's graduation rate improved by several percentage points, meaning more teenagers in these states did in fact earn their high school diplomas.

While many states in more rural regions of America do a better job of graduating high school students on time than some of their non-rural counterparts, the rate for college and postgraduate school attendance do not match this success.

The reasons behind the difference of success between high school graduation and college attendance are unclear. However, the data show that urban areas, compared to rural ones, offer much higher earnings for workers with the same level of education and urban-rural earnings gaps increase significantly with higher levels of education.[41] This suggests lower demand for higher education in rural areas might be explained by fewer employment opportunities that would justify the expense.

Issues relating to the accessibility and affordability of higher education in general may also contribute, as might the relative absence of role models. College-educated adults tend to produce college-educated children, and rural adults are only about half as likely as their urban peers to have obtained a bachelor's degree or higher – 19 percent versus 33 percent.

In fact, nearly 4 out of 5 "low education" counties, as defined by those where 20 percent or more of adults do not have a high school diploma or equivalent, are rural. Low educational attainment in rural areas is closely linked to higher unemployment and higher poverty rates. And poor children, in turn, are more likely to drop out of school, so higher poverty in some rural areas is likely both a cause and a consequence of lower educational attainment.[42]

Patience, 6, Kentucky

Photo: Ellery Lamm, Save the Children

Risk of Death Due to Injury Higher in Rural America

In 2016, homicide and suicide counted for 5,305 deaths among children aged 19 and younger in the United States. The violence ranking shows that youth homicide and suicide rates vary widely by state, ranging from a low of 2.9 violent deaths per 100,000 children in Connecticut to a high in Montana of 14.2.

Among youth aged 15 to 19, these violent deaths represent the leading cause of death after accidents, a broad category that includes self-inflicted fatal accidents such as drug overdoses and car crash fatalities.[43] In comparing child homicide rates worldwide, Save the Children's global *End of Childhood Index* finds homicides more common among children in the U.S. than in any other developed country with available data.[44]

States where children are most at risk of becoming victims of violence have few large metropolitan areas, including Alaska, Montana and South Dakota.

Homicide and suicide rates alone, however, do not tell the whole story of violence facing America's youth. Injury death rates are significantly higher in rural America. Although compared to urban areas, rural areas have lower reported rates of homicide, rates of injury deaths such as car crashes, drownings, suffocation, unintentional firearm deaths, machinery accidents, and environmental/exposure injuries are much higher.

Deaths due to car crashes, for example, are twice as common in the most rural counties compared to the most urban. For children aged 0 to 14, firearm-related deaths are also significantly higher. In fact, when considering all of the ways in which a child might die by intentional or unintentional injury, the risk of death is at least 20 to 30 percent higher in the most rural counties in America than the most urban ones.[45] And, the more rural the community, the higher the risk of injury.

Rural risks are higher in part because health care is harder to find and access in these areas. Injury risk is the highest in places least likely to be served by emergency doctors and on-call specialists. Increased risk taking and higher rates of alcohol and substance abuse may also play a role.

Similar patterns are also seen for suicides among children and youth. One recent study published in the JAMA Pediatrics Journal found that the rate of suicide for young rural Americans aged 10 to 24 was almost double the rate of youth in urban areas. More troubling is that rural-urban disparities continue to increase.[46] The study attributed this stark difference to social isolation, greater availability of guns and difficulty accessing health care in rural communities as compared to urban ones.

These findings support improving access to trauma centers in rural areas, as well as continued injury and violence prevention efforts specifically tailored to rural and urban settings.

Appalachia

Photo: Ellery Lamm, Save the Children

Teen Birth Rates Highest in Rural America

Over the past 27 years, the adolescent birth rate in the United States has declined by 67 percent. This is welcome news, and since last year, babies born to mothers ages 15 to 19 decreased by 9 percent.[47]

In 2016, teenage girls gave birth to 209,809 babies across America.[48] States in the Northeast tend to have the lowest teen birth rates. The highest rates tend to be in states in the South.

Alarmingly, adolescent birth rates are highest in rural areas and the rural-urban gap is growing. A recent study by the CDC reported that birth rates among adolescent women in rural areas were declining, but at a slower pace than those of urban teens. From 2007 to 2015, teen birth rates in large urban counties dropped by half, while teen birth rates in rural areas fell by 37 percent.[49]

As a result, the relative rural-urban gap has doubled. In 2015, teen birth rates in rural areas were over 60 percent higher than those found in urban areas – rates were 30.9 and 18.9 per 1,000 live births respectively. This is as compared to 30 percent higher in 2007.

Differences across racial and ethnic groups are particularly striking. Teen birth rates among black and Hispanic girls are 36 and 50 percent higher in rural areas compared to large urban counties. But among white girls, they are 250 percent higher, meaning white teens in rural areas are 2.5 times as likely to give birth as their counterparts in urban centers.[50] Higher teen birth rates in rural areas may in part be attributed to earlier sexual initiation and higher rates of formal marriage in these settings.[51]

Starr and her son Jarvis, 9 months, Mississippi

Photo: Jeremy Soulliere, Save the Children

2018 CHILDHOOD ENDERS STATE-BY-STATE RANKINGS

Infant Mortality

RANK	STATE	INFANT DEATHS Number, Aged 0-1, 2016	INFANT MORTALITY RATE Deaths per 1,000 live births, 2016	CHANGE 2017 - 2018 Based on Rate
1	Vermont	19	0.0	+
2	New Hampshire	45	3.7	+
3	Massachusetts	279	3.9	+
4	New Jersey	421	4.1	+
5	California	2,057	4.2	+
6	Washington	390	4.3	+
7	New York	1047	4.5	+
8	Oregon	211	4.6	+
9	Colorado	319	4.8	–
9	Connecticut	174	4.8	+
9	South Dakota	59	4.8	+
12	Wyoming	37	5.0	
13	Minnesota	356	5.1	+
14	Alaska	60	5.4	+
14	Arizona	456	5.4	+
14	Utah	274	5.4	–
17	Nevada	207	5.7	–
17	Rhode Island	62	5.7	–
17	Texas	2,287	5.7	
20	Maine	74	5.8	+
20	Virginia	595	5.8	+
22	Kansas	225	5.9	
22	Montana	72	5.9	+
24	Florida	1,381	6.1	+
24	Hawaii	110	6.1	–
24	Idaho	137	6.1	–
24	Iowa	240	6.1	–
24	Pennsylvania	857	6.1	
29	Nebraska	164	6.2	–
29	New Mexico	154	6.2	–
31	Illinois	980	6.3	–
31	Wisconsin	422	6.3	–
33	Michigan	730	6.4	+
34	Missouri	488	6.5	
34	North Dakota	74	6.5	+
36	Maryland	480	6.6	+
37	Kentucky	370	6.7	
38	South Carolina	401	7.0	
39	North Carolina	870	7.2	+
40	West Virginia	139	7.3	–
41	Ohio	1,023	7.4	–
41	Oklahoma	391	7.4	–
41	Tennessee	597	7.4	–
44	Georgia	976	7.5	+
44	Indiana	620	7.5	–
46	Delaware	87	7.9	+
47	Louisiana	503	8.0	–
48	Arkansas	309	8.1	–
49	Mississippi	325	8.6	+
50	Alabama	537	9.1	–
	United States	23,161	5.9	

+ Data suggest conditions have improved since last year's report.
– Data suggest conditions have deteriorated since last year's report. Rate is the same as 2015.

Malnutrition

RANK	STATE	FOOD INSECURE CHILDREN Number, Aged 0-18, 2015	CHILD FOOD INSECURITY RATE Percentage, 2015	CHANGE 2017 - 2018 Based on Percentage
1	North Dakota	16,130	9.4%	+
2	New Hampshire	33,940	12.9%	+
3	Massachusetts	187,290	13.5%	+
4	Minnesota	177,080	13.8%	+
5	Virginia	268,670	14.4%	+
6	New Jersey	298,010	14.9%	+
7	Vermont	18,820	15.7%	+
8	Maryland	220,010	16.3%	+
9	Utah	149,790	16.4%	+
10	Colorado	207,650	16.5%	+
11	Connecticut	127,400	16.7%	+
11	Iowa	121,550	16.7%	+
13	Wyoming	23,550	16.9%	–
14	Wisconsin	219,280	17.0%	+
15	Delaware	35,310	17.3%	+
15	Illinois	513,270	17.3%	+
17	Idaho	76,070	17.6%	+
18	Pennsylvania	482,130	17.9%	+
19	Michigan	397,070	18.0%	+
19	South Dakota	37,670	18.0%	+
21	Rhode Island	38,430	18.1%	+
22	Nebraska	85,970	18.3%	+
23	Missouri	258,610	18.6%	+
24	Montana	42,480	18.8%	+
25	Washington	306,560	19.0%	+
26	Indiana	301,990	19.1%	+
27	Kansas	138,480	19.2%	+
28	New York	819,460	19.4%	+
29	Alaska	36,560	19.6%	+
30	Kentucky	202,050	20.0%	+
31	Hawaii	62,600	20.1%	+
32	California	1,890,050	20.7%	+
32	South Carolina	225,550	20.7%	+
34	West Virginia	79,050	20.8%	+
35	Tennessee	315,370	21.1%	+
36	Maine	54,830	21.4%	+
37	Ohio	575,020	21.9%	+
38	Nevada	149,460	22.4%	+
39	Oregon	194,070	22.5%	+
40	North Carolina	516,120	22.6%	+
40	Oklahoma	216,980	22.6%	+
42	Florida	930,730	22.7%	+
43	Georgia	580,830	23.2%	+
44	Louisiana	261,230	23.4%	+
45	Texas	1,713,430	23.8%	+
46	Arizona	389,850	24.0%	+
47	Alabama	267,040	24.1%	+
48	Arkansas	176,710	25.0%	+
48	New Mexico	124,980	25.0%	+
50	Mississippi	191,750	26.3%	+
	United States	13,118,000	17.9%	+

+ Data suggest conditions have improved since last year's report.
– Data suggest conditions have deteriorated since last year's report. Percentage is the same as 2014.

Dominic, 7, Kentucky

Photo: Victoria Zegler, Save the Children

High School Drop Outs

RANK	STATE	HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS NOT GRADUATING ON TIME Percentage, 2015 - 2016 School Year	CHANGE 2017 - 2018 Based on Percentage
1	Iowa	8.7%	+
2	New Jersey	9.9%	+
3	West Virginia	10.2%	+
4	Nebraska	10.7%	+
5	Texas	10.9%	+
6	Missouri	11.0%	+
7	Kentucky	11.4%	+
8	Tennessee	11.5%	+
9	New Hampshire	11.8%	+
9	Wisconsin	11.8%	–
11	Vermont	12.3%	
12	Maryland	12.4%	+
13	Massachusetts	12.5%	+
13	North Dakota	12.5%	+
15	Connecticut	12.6%	+
16	Alabama	12.9%	–
17	Arkansas	13.0%	+
17	Maine	13.0%	–
19	Indiana	13.2%	–
20	Virginia	13.3%	+
21	Pennsylvania	13.9%	+
22	North Carolina	14.1%	+
23	Kansas	14.3%	
24	Montana	14.4%	–
25	Delaware	14.5%	–
25	Illinois	14.5%	–
27	Utah	14.8%	+
28	South Dakota	16.1%	
29	Ohio	16.5%	+
30	California	17.0%	+
31	Rhode Island	17.2%	–
32	Hawaii	17.3%	+
33	South Carolina	17.4%	+
34	Mississippi	17.7%	+
35	Minnesota	17.8%	+
36	Oklahoma	18.4%	–
37	Florida	19.3%	+
38	New York	19.6%	+
39	Wyoming	20.0%	+
40	Idaho	20.3%	+
40	Michigan	20.3%	–
40	Washington	20.3%	+
43	Arizona	20.5%	+
44	Georgia	20.6%	+
45	Colorado	21.1%	+
46	Louisiana	21.4%	+
47	Alaska	23.9%	+
48	Oregon	25.2%	+
49	Nevada	26.4%	+
50	New Mexico	29.0%	+
	United States	15.9%	+

+ Data suggest conditions have improved since last year's report.
– Data suggest conditions have deteriorated since last year's report. Percentage is the same as 2014 - 2015 school year.

Violence

RANK	STATE	HOMICIDES AND SUICIDES Number, Aged 0-19, 2016	HOMICIDE AND SUICIDE RATE Deaths per 100,000, 2016	CHANGE 2017 - 2018 Based on Rate
1	Rhode Island	< 10	*	
1	Vermont	< 10	*	
3	Connecticut	25	2.9	+
4	Massachusetts	53	3.3	+
5	New Jersey	83	3.8	–
6	New York	190	4.0	–
7	California	473	4.7	
8	Minnesota	68	4.8	+
9	Hawaii	18	5.3	–
10	New Hampshire	16	5.4	–
10	Washington	97	5.4	+
12	North Dakota	11	5.5	
13	Maine	16	5.6	–
14	Iowa	47	5.7	
14	Oregon	55	5.7	–
16	Nebraska	31	5.9	–
17	Texas	488	6.1	–
18	Idaho	31	6.4	–
19	Arizona	118	6.5	+
19	Delaware	15	6.5	+
19	Utah	66	6.5	+
19	Virginia	137	6.5	–
23	Florida	305	6.6	–
24	West Virginia	28	6.7	–
24	Wisconsin	96	6.7	–
26	North Carolina	174	6.8	–
26	Ohio	198	6.8	+
26	Pennsylvania	205	6.8	–
29	Kansas	55	6.9	–
30	Michigan	172	7.0	–
31	Mississippi	57	7.1	–
32	New Mexico	40	7.3	+
33	Arkansas	60	7.7	–
33	Georgia	215	7.7	–
33	Maryland	116	7.7	–
33	South Carolina	95	7.7	–
37	Kentucky	89	7.9	–
38	Colorado	112	8.0	+
38	Indiana	140	8.0	–
40	Tennessee	136	8.2	–
41	Alabama	101	8.3	–
42	Nevada	63	8.5	–
42	Wyoming	13	8.5	+
44	Oklahoma	93	8.7	+
45	Illinois	303	9.3	–
46	Missouri	149	9.7	–
47	Louisiana	129	10.5	
48	Alaska	27	13.2	+
49	South Dakota	32	13.5	+
50	Montana	36	14.2	–
	United States	5,305	6.5	–

* Note that for these two states, child homicide and suicide data were suppressed by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention due to extremely small frequency counts of 9 or less.

+ Data suggest conditions have improved since last year's report.
– Data suggest conditions have deteriorated since last year's report. Rate is the same as 2015, or in the case of North Dakota, was not available.

Adolescent Births

RANK	STATE	TEEN BIRTHS Number, Aged 15-19, 2016	TEEN BIRTH RATE Births per 1,000 girls Aged 15 -19, 2016	CHANGE 2017 - 2018 Based on Rate
1	Massachusetts	1,932	8.5	+
2	New Hampshire	392	9.3	+
3	Connecticut	1,136	9.4	+
4	Vermont	213	10.3	+
5	New Jersey	3,060	11.0	+
6	Minnesota	2,200	12.6	+
7	Rhode Island	474	12.9	+
8	New York	8,003	13.2	+
9	Maine	574	14.7	+
10	Wisconsin	2,808	15.0	+
11	Virginia	4,114	15.5	+
12	Utah	1,829	15.6	+
13	Pennsylvania	6,385	15.8	+
14	Maryland	3,017	15.9	+
15	Oregon	2,004	16.6	+
15	Washington	3,584	16.6	+
17	California	21,412	17.0	+
18	Iowa	1,804	17.2	+
19	Michigan	5,792	17.7	+
20	Colorado	3,068	17.8	+
21	Illinois	7,729	18.7	+
22	Nebraska	1,213	19.1	+
23	Hawaii	728	19.2	+
24	Florida	11,195	19.3	+
25	Delaware	583	19.5	–
26	Idaho	1,171	20.1	+
27	North Dakota	469	20.3	+
28	North Carolina	7,190	21.8	+
28	Ohio	8,151	21.8	+
30	Kansas	2,125	21.9	+
31	Missouri	4,505	23.4	+
32	Arizona	5,357	23.6	+
32	Georgia	8,248	23.6	+
32	Indiana	5,255	23.6	+
35	Montana	720	23.7	+
35	South Carolina	3,695	23.7	+
37	Nevada	2,078	24.2	+
38	South Dakota	681	25.1	+
39	Alaska	583	25.8	+
40	Wyoming	463	26.1	+
41	Tennessee	5,766	28.0	+
42	Alabama	4,480	28.4	+
43	West Virginia	1,555	29.3	+
44	New Mexico	2,019	29.8	+
45	Louisiana	4,545	30.6	+
46	Kentucky	4,331	30.9	+
47	Texas	29,765	31.0	+
48	Mississippi	3,326	32.6	+
49	Oklahoma	4,250	33.4	+
50	Arkansas	3,372	34.6	+
	United States	209,809	20.0	+

+ Data suggest conditions have improved since last year's report.
– Data suggest conditions have deteriorated since last year's report. Rate is the same as 2015.

Whitley County, Kentucky, where 38.9 percent of kids grow up in poverty.

Photo: Ellery Lamm, Save the Children

SUCCESS STORY

Sky is the Limit for "Miracle" Baby

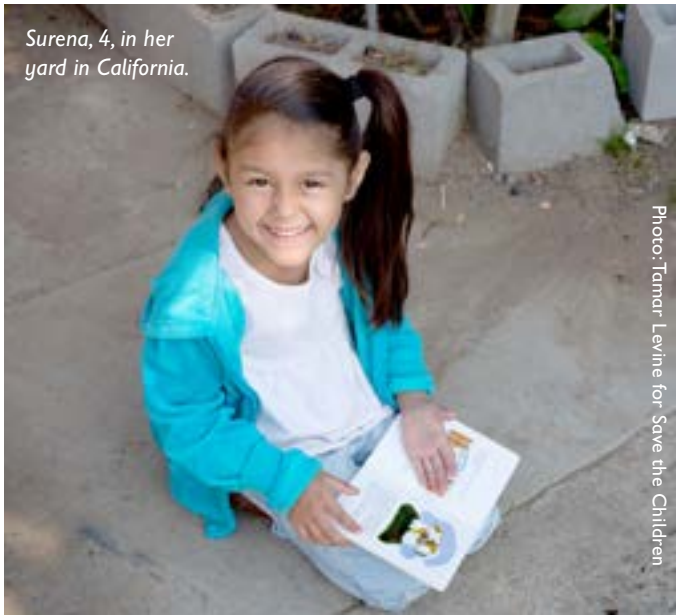
Four-year-old Surena lives up to her nickname, Millie, every day. The moniker is short for Milagros, which means "miracle" in Spanish.

Now thriving and healthy, the preschooler's first days of life were not so certain. Born three months premature – and weighing 1 pound, 2 ounces – Surena's first months were spent in a neonatal unit at a children's hospital, 60 miles from her family in California's Central Valley.

Her teen mother, Rosa, feeling isolated and alone just before Surena's birth, connected with Save the Children, a rare family resource in Rosa's remote, rural town, which struggles with limited services, poverty and unemployment.

"When I was pregnant and I had nobody talk about what I was afraid of, Save the Children sent me Diana," said Rosa, speaking warmly of the early childhood specialist, Diana, who comes to visit the family. "I didn't know anything about babies or what I had to do, (and she) helped me understand what I needed to do to help my baby. As a mom, I have to do the best, and be the best mother I can be, and I wouldn't have been able to do it alone."

Diana conducts family home visits as part of Save the Children's Early Steps to School Success program. Through such visits, parents are equipped with the skills to successfully support their children's growth. And as a child grows, the program offers book exchanges and parent-child groups, laying a foundation of language and literacy skills for the child, and opportunities to develop socially and emotionally with their peers.



Surena, 4, in her yard in California.

Photo: Tamar Levine for Save the Children

With such a fragile beginning, Surena was still considered a high health risk when she left the hospital. There were times she stopped breathing while she was sleeping, Rosa said, and the new mom would rub Surena's back, arms and legs to stimulate the newborn's lungs.

From the start, Diana connected the family with a nurse and the closest high-risk infant services, as well as counseling services for Rosa.

"Many times I felt like giving up, but Diana would not let me," Rosa said. "She's like family to us."

Learning that reading, talking and singing regularly to Surena was critical for her development, Rosa made a point to engage in these activities daily with her daughter.

"I learned that it would help her and I learned to enjoy it," Rosa said.

At first very shy and hesitant to participate in the early-learning activities Diana initiated during the home visits, Surena slowly came out of her shell, talking a little more and growing in confidence. And when given the opportunity to create with chalk, crayons or otherwise during home visits, she would always light up with a smile.

These days, Surena is attending preschool and eagerly awaits getting her book bag each week, as part of the Early Steps to School Success Book Bag Exchange. She and her mom – who was inspired to go on to finish her high school education – are also regularly attending the program's parent-child groups.

"As a teacher, and hearing Surena's story, I am amazed because I have seen this child blossom," said Surena's preschool teacher, Crystal. "Save the Children succeeded in giving this child the extra push she needed, by helping her learn how to be ready for school, and especially having the confidence to learn and have fun while learning. Look at her smile. Surena has learned to be herself, she is special and loved, and she can do anything.

Advocating for America's Kids

Every child deserves a bright future, yet for far too many of America's children growing up in rural communities, their chance at success is severely limited simply because of their zip code. Save the Children is committed to ensuring every last child reaches his or her full potential. In the United States, that means serving and advocating for those rural children who are overlooked and underserved.

Rural Child Poverty is an Emergency

Persistent child poverty in many rural communities constitutes a crisis across America. Conditions in some rural communities rival conditions in developing nations. In much of Appalachia, for example, life expectancy is lower than in Bangladesh and Vietnam. Many families are living on less than $2 per day.[52] The lack of appropriate infrastructure including transportation, access to health care and fresh fruits and vegetables, along with geographic isolation and non-existent broadband capacity create obstacles to effecting change in rural communities across America.

We are calling on the federal, state and local governments to respond and invest accordingly.

A Collective Impact Approach Ensures Sustainable, Realistic Change

Since Save the Children began working in Harlan County, Kentucky in 1932 serving children and families hardest-hit by the Great Depression, we have operated on the core tenant that community development activities are most successful when designed and implemented locally, understanding that "disadvantaged people – not only elites within their communities – have great and largely unrealized talents for solving their problems."

That is why we believe in taking a collective impact approach where folks from across the community – faith, local leaders, business, educators, law enforcement and beyond – come together to cast a unifying vision and set of objectives to positively impact children. Collective impact is the commitment of a group of actors from different sectors, solving a common problem using a structured form of collaboration. Working toward a shared goal for children will be critical in helping reverse these trends.

It is imperative for elected officials to create space for rural voices to inform policy decisions. We must work together to find and tailor innovative approaches for rural contexts and engage both public and private partners to replicate and scale solutions that work.

Early Investments Create the Greatest Returns

Quality early childhood programs help save taxpayers' money in the long run. In fact, a December 2016 report from Nobel Prize-winning economist James Heckman shows the rate of return on investments in early childhood development for disadvantaged children can be 13 percent per child, per year, due to improved outcomes in education, health, sociability and economic productivity. Children who have access to a high-quality program often go on to earn higher incomes, are 20 percent more likely to graduate from high school and are 50 percent less likely to be arrested for a violent crime.

Quality early childhood education makes kids more successful and as a nation, we will all benefit from that success for decades to come. Today's children are tomorrow's engineers, teachers and business leaders.

Federal programs including Head Start, Early Head Start, Maternal, Infant, Early Childhood Home Visiting (MIECHV) and Child Care Development Block Grants are essential, but more investment is needed in order to serve our nation's

most vulnerable children. Even as we work to protect and grow these proven programs, we must also increase investment of state and local resources in high-quality early childhood programs.

Investing in Our Shared Future

While children are only 20 percent of the population, they are 100 percent of America's future.

In September 2015, world leaders came together and agreed upon an ambitious global framework for ending poverty called the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which includes 17 Sustainable Development Goals. The SDGs promise a future in which all children have a full childhood – free from malnutrition and violence, with access to quality health care and education – and reinforces obligations to children set out in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. Most importantly, this is a future in which no child is overlooked or left behind.

This year's *End of Childhood Report* and *U.S. Complement* again demonstrate that we are far from realizing the vision where all children survive and thrive. Millions of children in the United States and around the world are excluded from progress, especially those living in marginalized, vulnerable communities.

We call on world leaders to value each and every child and their right to survive, thrive and be protected by following through on the commitments made under the SDGs and by taking immediate steps to implement the pledge to leave no one behind. This will require the government to invest in children, ensure all children are treated equally and count and include all children, regardless of who they are or where they are from.

These cross-cutting guarantees are global and will help ensure every last child has the childhood – and future – they deserve.

Children in their first grade classroom in South Carolina.

Photo: Masseo Davis for Save the Children

Justin, 7, South Carolina

Photo: Susan Warner, Save the Children

Alphabetical State Ranking

RANK	STATE	AVERAGE RANK, FOR ALL 5 ENDERS
44 V	Alabama	39.2
42 ^	Alaska	35.4
34 ^	Arizona	30.8
44	Arkansas	39.2
14	California	18.2
21 V	Colorado	24.4
5 ^	Connecticut	8.2
24 ^	Delaware	26.0
33 ^	Florida	30.0
44 ^	Georgia	39.2
20	Hawaii	23.8
23 V	Idaho	25.0
27 V	Illinois	27.4
38 V	Indiana	31.8
7 V	Iowa	13.6
25 V	Kansas	26.2
37 V	Kentucky	31.4
50	Louisiana	45.8
16 V	Maine	19.0
19 V	Maryland	20.6
2	Massachusetts	4.8
29 V	Michigan	28.2
6 ^	Minnesota	13.2
49	Mississippi	42.4
28 ^	Missouri	28.0
35 V	Montana	31.0
15 V	Nebraska	18.6
43 V	Nevada	36.6
4 V	New Hampshire	5.0
1 ^	New Jersey	4.4
47 ^	New Mexico	40.6
11	New York	17.4
35 V	North Carolina	31.0
11 ^	North Dakota	17.4
39 ^	Ohio	32.2
48 V	Oklahoma	42.0
22 ^	Oregon	24.8
18	Pennsylvania	20.4
9 ^	Rhode Island	15.4
41 V	South Carolina	34.2
30 ^	South Dakota	28.6
40 V	Tennessee	33.0
25 V	Texas	26.2
10 ^	Utah	16.2
2 ^	Vermont	4.8
8	Virginia	15.0
17 ^	Washington	19.2
31	West Virginia	28.8
13 V	Wisconsin	17.6
32 V	Wyoming	29.2

^ Rank improved since 2017 U.S. Complement to The End of Childhood Report.

V Rank declined since 2017 U.S. Complement to The End of Childhood Report.

Complete Data: U.S. Complement to The End of Childhood Report 2018

2018 OVERALL								2017 RANK		2017 - 2018
RANK	STATE	AVERAGE RANK, ALL 5 ENDERS	CHILD DIES	CHILD IS MALNOURISHED	CHILD DROPS OUT OF SCHOOL	CHILD IS A VICTIM OF VIOLENCE	CHILD HAS A CHILD	AVERAGE RANK	RANK (OUT OF 50)	RANK MOVEMENT
1	New Jersey	4.4	4	6	2	5	5	5.4	3	+2
2	Massachusetts	4.8	3	3	13	4	1	5.0	2	0
2	Vermont	4.8	1	7	11	1	4	7.2	4	+2
4	New Hampshire	5.0	2	2	9	10	2	4.6	1	–3
5	Connecticut	8.2	9	11	15	3	3	10.2	6	+1
6	Minnesota	13.2	13	4	35	8	6	14.4	7	+1
7	Iowa	13.6	24	11	1	14	18	9.6	5	–2
8	Virginia	15.0	20	5	20	19	11	14.6	8	0
9	Rhode Island	15.4	17	21	31	1	7	15.6	10	+1
10	Utah	16.2	14	9	27	19	12	19.6	16	+6
11	New York	17.4	7	28	38	6	8	16.2	11	0
11	North Dakota	17.4	34	1	13	12	27	16.6	12	+1
13	Wisconsin	17.6	31	14	9	24	10	15.0	9	–4
14	California	18.2	5	32	30	7	17	19.0	14	0
15	Nebraska	18.6	29	22	4	16	22	16.8	13	–2
16	Maine	19.0	20	36	17	13	9	19.2	15	–1
17	Washington	19.2	6	25	40	10	15	24.6	22	+5
18	Pennsylvania	20.4	24	18	21	26	13	20.8	18	0
19	Maryland	20.6	36	8	12	33	14	20.4	17	–2
20	Hawaii	23.8	24	31	32	9	23	24.2	20	0
21	Colorado	24.4	9	10	45	38	20	24.2	20	–1
22	Oregon	24.8	8	39	48	14	15	27.0	26	+4
23	Idaho	25.0	24	17	40	18	26	21.4	19	–4
24	Delaware	26.0	46	15	25	19	25	27.4	27	+3
25	Kansas	26.2	22	27	23	29	30	25.4	24	–1
25	Texas	26.2	17	45	5	17	47	25.2	23	–2
27	Illinois	27.4	31	15	25	45	21	25.6	25	–2
28	Missouri	28.0	34	23	6	46	31	28.0	29	+1
29	Michigan	28.2	33	19	40	30	19	27.8	28	–1
30	South Dakota	28.6	9	19	28	49	38	33.8	39	+9
31	West Virginia	28.8	40	34	3	24	43	28.8	31	0
32	Wyoming	29.2	12	13	39	42	40	28.2	30	–2
33	Florida	30.0	24	42	37	23	24	32.4	36	+3
34	Arizona	30.8	14	46	43	19	32	34.6	41	+6
35	Montana	31.0	22	24	24	50	35	28.8	31	–5
35	North Carolina	31.0	39	40	22	26	28	30.8	34	–1
37	Kentucky	31.4	37	30	7	37	46	29.2	33	–4
38	Indiana	31.8	44	26	19	38	32	31.4	35	–3
39	Ohio	32.2	41	37	29	26	28	34.4	40	+2
40	Tennessee	33.0	41	35	8	40	41	33.0	37	–3
41	South Carolina	34.2	38	32	33	33	35	33.6	38	–3
42	Alaska	35.4	14	29	47	48	39	39.0	45	+3
43	Nevada	36.6	17	38	49	42	37	34.8	42	–1
44	Alabama	39.2	50	47	16	41	42	35.4	43	–1
44	Arkansas	39.2	48	48	17	33	50	38.4	44	0
44	Georgia	39.2	44	43	44	33	32	39.8	46	+2
47	New Mexico	40.6	29	48	50	32	44	40.0	48	+1
48	Oklahoma	42.0	41	40	36	44	49	39.8	46	–2
49	Mississippi	42.4	49	50	34	31	48	43.8	49	0
50	Louisiana	45.8	47	44	46	47	45	44.2	50	0

Top Performing States Bottom Performing States

Every child has a right to childhood. The concept of childhood is defined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child.[53] It represents a shared vision of childhood: healthy children in school and at play, growing strong and confident with the love and encouragement of their family and an extended community of caring adults, gradually taking on the responsibilities of adulthood, free from fear, safe from violence, protected from harm and exploitation. This ideal contrasts starkly with the childhood many children experience.

States differ greatly in their ability to protect childhood. The *End of Childhood State Ranking* explores this variation across states, revealing where and how children are being robbed of the childhoods they deserve. Save the Children hopes this report will stimulate discussion and action to ensure that every last child fully experiences childhood.

CHILDHOOD ENDERS

The ranking does not capture the full extent of deprivations or hardships affecting children. Instead, it focuses on some key rights, or "guarantees" of childhood: life, healthy growth and development, education and protection from harm. If a child experiences all of these, his/her childhood is considered to be "intact."

The ranking tracks a series of events that, should any one of them occur, mark the end of an intact childhood. These events are called "childhood enders" and include: child dies, child is malnourished, child drops out of school, child is a victim of violence, child has a child.

Ender events erode childhood. Depending on the number and severity of enders experienced, the loss of childhood could be complete or only partial. But once a child experiences an ender, childhood becomes fractured rather than complete. Each event represents an assault on childhood. At some point, as the assaults mount up, childhood ends.

States were ranked according to performance across this set of enders, revealing where childhood is most and least threatened.

INDICATORS, DEFINITIONS, AND DATA SOURCES

The following five indicators were selected because they best represent these childhood enders, are available for all states and are regularly updated. All data were obtained from U.S. government agency sources, which are publicly available and transparent sources of information and also cited in this report.

Infant Mortality Rate

Deaths occurring to infants under 1 year of age per 1,000 live births in 2016. The data are reported by the place of residence, not the place of death. Although adjusted for differences in age-distribution and population size, rankings by state do not take into account other state specific population characteristics that may affect the level of mortality. When the number of deaths is small, rankings by state may be unreliable due to instability in death rates. *Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Health Statistics.*

Food Insecurity Rate

Children under 18 living in households that experience food insecurity at some time during the year. These rates are for 2015, the latest year available for child food insecurity rates by state. Food insecurity is defined as limited or uncertain access to food. Food insecurity is a household-level economic and social condition of limited access to adequate food. It is distinct from hunger, an individual-level physiological condition that may result from food insecurity. *Source: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service. Feeding America's Map the Meal Gap 2017: A report on County and Congressional District Food Insecurity and County Food Cost in the United States in 2015.*

High School Graduation Rate

Public high school 4-year adjusted cohort graduation rate (ACGR) for the United States and all 50 states during school year 2015-16. The 4-year ACGR is the number of students who graduate in 4 years with a regular high school diploma divided by the number of students who form the adjusted cohort for the graduating class. From the beginning of high school, students who are entering that grade for the first time form a cohort that is "adjusted" by adding any students who subsequently transfer into the cohort and subtracting any students who subsequently transfer out, emigrate to another country or die. This rate was subtracted from 100 percent to give the share of children not graduating from high school on time. *Source: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics.*

Child Homicide and Suicide Rate

Violence-related injury deaths, which include homicides and suicides to children from birth through age 19 per 100,000 children in 2016. It is important to note that several measures were regarded as "unstable" or "suppressed" by the CDC because of the size of the count of deaths in computing the rate. Any count below 16, which belong to Rhode Island and Vermont, were noted as "unstable." *Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Injury Prevention and Control.*

Teen Birth Rate

Babies born to adolescents living in the United States aged 15 to 19 per 1,000 females in 2016. Data reflect the mother's place of residence, rather than the place of birth. *Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.*

CALCULATIONS

For each childhood ender, a ranking of states was calculated. States with a higher ranking (closer to number one) have better results on that childhood indicator. An average rank for each state based on all five indicators was calculated by adding each of the five indicator ranks together and dividing by five:

STEP 1: Rank1 + Rank2 + Rank3 + Rank4 + Rank5 = Rank Sum

STEP 2: Rank Sum/5 = Average Rank

States were then re-ranked from 1 to 50 based on this average rank.

For two states, Rhode Island and Vermont, the child homicide and suicide data were suppressed by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention due to extremely small frequency counts of 10 or less. To account for these missing data, the two states were given a ranking of 1 on the child is a victim of violence ender. Because these states had extremely low numbers of homicides and suicides, it was determined that the most appropriate approach to addressing the suppressed data was to estimate that their calculated homicide and suicide rates would also be very low, yielding a ranking of 1 for this indicator.

ENDNOTES

[1] Not all U.S. states have rural areas. There are no rural counties in Delaware, New Jersey or Rhode Island, therefore resulting in 47 states in this data point.

[2] Save the Children. *End of Childhood Report 2018: The Many Faces of Exclusion.* (Fairfield, Connecticut: 2018). Page 1.

[3] An estimated 1.2 billion children are at risk of missing out on childhood. This figure includes all boys and girls living in countries characterized by conflict/fragility or widespread poverty as well as girls living in countries characterized by discrimination against girls (i.e., not also poverty or conflict). The same rules apply to the 537 million children living in countries characterized by two or more of these threats, those deemed to be at "high risk" of missing out on childhood (i.e., boys were counted only in countries facing both poverty and conflict, not in countries facing discrimination against girls and one other threat). The 153 million children at "extreme risk," however, include both boys and girls in countries characterized by all three threats. See Methodology and Research Notes for details.

[4] Save the Children. *End of Childhood Report 2018: The Many Faces of Exclusion.* (Fairfield, Connecticut: 2018). Page 31.

[5] Save the Children. *End of Childhood Report 2017: Stolen Childhoods.* (Fairfield, Connecticut: 2017). Page 29.

[6] In the United States, being in poverty is officially defined as having an income below a federally determined poverty threshold. Poverty thresholds were developed in the 1960s and are adjusted annually to account for inflation. They represent the federal government's estimate of the point below which a family of a given size has cash income insufficient to meet basic needs. The thresholds form the basis for calculating the "incidence of poverty," which is typically reported as a headcount or as a percentage of the population.

[7] For the U.S. overall and metro/nonmetro poverty rates, including those disaggregated by age group, depth of poverty and race/ethnicity, statistics are shown for individuals under 18 for whom poverty status is determined (i.e., for all children). For child poverty rates by family type and county-level poverty rates, statistics are shown just for related children. Related children are defined by the U.S. Census as "any child under 18 years old who is related to the householder by birth, marriage, or adoption. Related children of the householder include ever-married as well as never-married children. Children, by definition, exclude persons under 18 years who maintain households or are spouses or unmarried partners of householders." In both populations, however, the Census Bureau does not determine poverty for unrelated children (those not related by birth, marriage, or adoption to a reference person within the household) under age 15. See the Census Bureau website for more details about the poverty population universe as it pertains to children and treatment of unrelated individuals under age 15.

[8] United States Department of Agriculture Economic Research Service. *Economic Information Bulletin 182.* (Washington, D.C.: 2017). Page 1.

[9] Save the Children analysis of data from the U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 2016. These estimates were derived from American Fact Finder table B17020, available at factfinder2.census.gov.

[10] According to the latest data available (2014), the only high-income OECD countries (out of 32 with available data) with child poverty rates that are higher than those found in the U.S. are Chile, Spain and Israel. Sources: OECD Family Database, Table C02.2 Child Poverty (www.oecd.org/els/family/database.htm) and World Bank Country and Lending Groups (https://datahelpdesk.worldbank.org/knowledgebase/articles/906519-world-bank-country-and-lending-groups).

[11] The Annie E. Casey Foundation. *2017 KIDS COUNT Data Book: State Trends in Child Well-Being.* (Baltimore: 2017).

[12] United States Department of Agriculture Economic Research Service. *Rural Poverty & Well-Being.* (https://www.ers.usda.gov/topics/rural-economy-population/rural-poverty-well-being). April 19, 2018.

[13] Estimates refer to child poverty rates in "metropolitan statistical areas," "micropolitan statistical areas" and "not in metropolitan or micropolitan statistical areas," respectively. Source: Save the Children's analysis of data from U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2016. These estimates were derived from American Fact Finder table C17001 (factfinder2.census.gov/).

[14] United States Department of Agriculture Economic Research Service. *Rural Poverty & Well-Being.* (https://www.ers.usda.gov/topics/rural-economy-population/rural-poverty-well-being). April 19, 2018.

[15] Ibid and Hertz, Thomas and Tracey Farrigan. *Understanding the Rise in Rural Child Poverty, 2003-14, Economic Research Report Number 208.* United States Department of Agriculture Economic Research Service. (Washington, D.C.: 2016).

[16] United States Department of Agriculture Economic Research Service. *Rural Poverty & Well-Being.* (https://www.ers.usda.gov/topics/rural-economy-population/rural-poverty-well-being). April 19, 2018.

[17] Ibid.

[18] McGranahan, David. *Rural Child Poverty Chart Gallery.* (https://www.ers.usda.gov/data-products/rural-child-poverty-chart-gallery.aspx). May 20, 2018.

[19] Save the Children's analysis of USDA ERS data (www.ers.usda.gov/data-products/chart-gallery/gallery/chart-detail/?chartId=62054), Accessed May 2, 2018.

[20] Save the Children's analysis of data from U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2016. These estimates were derived from American Fact Finder table B18130 (factfinder2.census.gov/).

[21] Farrigan, Tracey. *Child Poverty.* United States Department of Agriculture Economic Research Service. (www.ers.usda.gov/topics/rural-economy-population/rural-poverty-well-being/child-poverty/). Accessed April 3, 2018.

[22] United States Department of Agriculture Economic Research Service. *Rural Education at a glance, 2017 Edition.* (Washington, D.C.: 2017).

[23] Save the Children's analysis of USDA ERS data (https://www.ers.usda.gov/data-products/chart-gallery/gallery/chart-detail/?chartId=88503). May 3, 2018.

[24] Ibid.

[25] Coleman-Jensen, Alisha et al. *Household Food Security in the United States in 2016.* United States Department of Agriculture Economic Research Service. (Washington, D.C.: 2017).

[26] Save the Children. *U.S. Complement to the End of Childhood Report 2017: Stolen Childhoods.* (Fairfield, Connecticut: 2017). Page 6.

[27] The Annie E. Casey Foundation. *Kids Count Data Center: Teens Ages 16 to 19 Not in School and Not High School Graduates.* (https://datacenter.kidscount.org/data/tables/73-teens-ages-16-to-19-not-in-school-and-not-high-school-graduates?loc=1&loct=2&loc=1&loct=2#detailed/1/any/false/870,573,869,36,868/any/380,381). April 19, 2018.

[28] Save the Children. *U.S. Complement to the End of Childhood Report 2017: Stolen Childhoods.* (Fairfield, Connecticut: 2017). Page 8.

[29] Martin, Joyce et al. *Births: Final Data for 2016.* U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Health Statistics. (Washington, D.C.: 2018).

[30] Save the Children. *U.S. Complement to the End of Childhood Report 2017: Stolen Childhoods.* (Fairfield, Connecticut: 2017). Page 1.

[31] Kochanek, Kenneth et al. *Mortality in the United States, 2016.* U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Health Statistics. (Washington, D.C.: 2017).

[32] Save the Children. *U.S. Complement to the End of Childhood Report 2017: Stolen Childhoods.* (Fairfield, Connecticut: 2017). Page 4.

[33] Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. *WISQARS: Fatal Injury Data Visualization Tool.* (https://wisqars-viz.cdc.gov/). April 26, 2018.

[34] Save the Children. *U.S. Complement to the End of Childhood Report 2017: Stolen Childhoods.* (Fairfield, Connecticut: 2017). Page 10.

[35] Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. *National Center for Health Statistics: Infant Health.* (https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/fastats/infant-health.htm) April 26. 2018.

[36] Ely, Danielle, Anne Driscoll and T.J. Matthews. *Infant Mortality Rates in Rural and Urban Areas in the United States, 2014.* U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Health Statistics. (Washington, D.C.: 2017).

[37] Ibid.

[38] Kids Count Data Center. *Teens Ages 16 to 19 Not in School and Not High School Graduates.* (https://datacenter.kidscount.org). April 26, 2018.

[39] U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics. *Rural Education in America: Percentage of Persons Ages 18 to 29 Enrolled in Colleges or Universities, by Age Group.* (https://nces.ed.gov/surveys/ruraled/tables/b.3.b.-1.asp). April 26. 2018.

[40] Civic Enterprises. *Building A Grad Nation: Progress and Challenges in Raising High School Graduation Rates, 2017 Annual Update.* (Washington, D.C.: 2017). Page 3.

[41] United States Department of Agriculture Economic Research Service. *Rural Education at a glance, 2017 Edition.* (Washington, D.C.: 2017). Page 4.

[42] Ibid. Page 5.

[43] Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. *Fatal Injury Data Visualization Tool.* (https://wisqars-viz.cdc.gov/). April 26, 2018.

[44] Save the Children. *End of Childhood Report 2018: The Many Faces of Exclusion.* (Fairfield, Connecticut: 2018). Pages 32-35.

[45] Myers, Sage et. al. *Safety in Numbers: Are Major Cities the Safest Places in the United States?* Annals of Emergency Medicine. Volume 62, Issue 4. (Irving, Texas: 2013). Pages 408-418.

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[47] Power to Decide. *National Data.* (https://powertodecide.org). April 26, 2018.

[48] Martin, Joyce et al. *National Vital Statistics Reports: Births: Final Data for 2016.* U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Health Statistics. (Washington, D.C.: 2018). Page 4.

[49] Hamilton, Brady et al. *Teen Birth Rates for Urban and Rural Areas in the United States, 2007-2015.* U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Health Statistics. (Washington, D.C.: 2016). Page 6.

[50] Ibid. Page 5.

[51] Daniels, Kimberly et al. *Urban and Rural Variation in Fertility-Related Behavior Among U.S. Women, 2011-2015.* U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Health Statistics. (Washington, D.C.: 2018). Page 1.

[52] Shaefer, H. Luke et al. *Can Poverty in America Be Compared to Conditions in the World's Poorest Countries?,* University of Michigan. (Ann Arbor, Michigan: 2016).

[53] Childhood means more than just the time between birth and adulthood. It refers to the state and condition of a child's life – to the quality of those years. As the most widely endorsed human rights treaty in history, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1989 and ratified by all but one country, represents a global consensus on the terms of childhood. Although there is not absolute agreement on the interpretation of each and every provision of the Convention, there is substantial common ground on what the standards of childhood should be. Source: UNICEF. *The State of the World's Children 2005.*

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Brantley, 6, Kentucky

Photo: Ellery Lamm, Save the Children

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Save the Children believes every child deserves a future. In the United States and around the world, we work every day to give children a healthy start in life, the opportunity to learn and protection from harm.

Save the Children
501 Kings Highway East
Suite 400
Fairfield, Connecticut 06825

899 North Capitol Street, NE
Suite 900
Washington, DC 20002

1 (800) 728-3843
www.SavetheChildren.org

ON THE COVER
Lexie, 9, Kentucky
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Save the Children