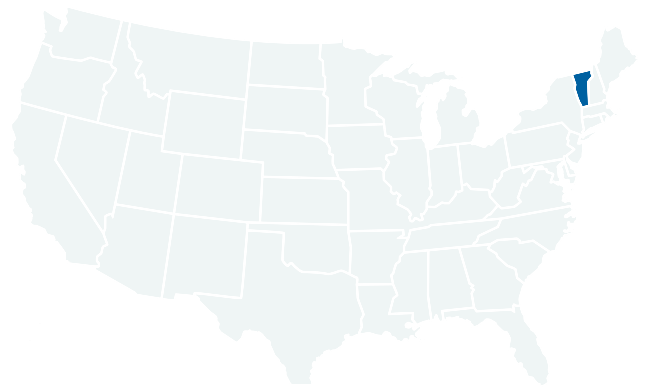


Vermont

Out of the Shadows Index: Shining a Light on Prevention of and Response to Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse in the United States



It takes place mostly in the shadows, but sexual violence against children is happening everywhere, irrespective of income level, age, race, religion and sexual orientation. Yet, child sexual exploitation and abuse (CSEA) can be solved, and there are strategies that have proved to be successful in reducing it. When CSEA is approached as a public health problem, with the child at the center of reforms, progress is possible.

The Out of the Shadows Index United States pilot (the US pilot index) aims to understand how states are tackling CSEA both in person and online. It serves as a tool for policymakers, frontline workers and civil society, capturing state action to combat CSEA and identifying key areas for attention.

Background indicators

Population (m)	0.6
Population under 18 (%)	19.5
Median household income (US\$)	61,973
GDP per head (US\$)	52,039

State summary

Vermont has demonstrated its commitment to tackling CSEA by strengthening its legislative framework, integrating its child protection services within a multidisciplinary framework and ensuring the delivery of support services that are child-centered. There is room for improvement in the state's data collection processes and in ensuring its CSEA education builds individual skills and knowledge responsive to public health needs.

Where has progress been made?

Strong legislative framework: Vermont has adopted a progressive definition of consent,¹ provides a close-in-age exemption for sexual activity between consenting peers under the age of consent, and requires background checks for individuals working directly with a child in all youth-serving organizations.

Integrated services and coordination: Multidisciplinary teams are required by statute to respond to cases of sexual abuse. Special Investigation Units to investigate CSEA are partnered and co-located with Children's Advocacy Centers (CACs) across Vermont.

Affordable and child-centered medical care: Vermont bears the costs of all sexual assault examinations, covering pregnancy tests, tests and medications for STIs, the cost of treatment for related injuries, and mental health counseling.

Strong evaluation processes of the justice system: Vermont has carried out an extensive series of ongoing evaluation processes involving various stakeholders across the child protection and justice systems, including law enforcement and service providers, as well as survivors and caregivers.

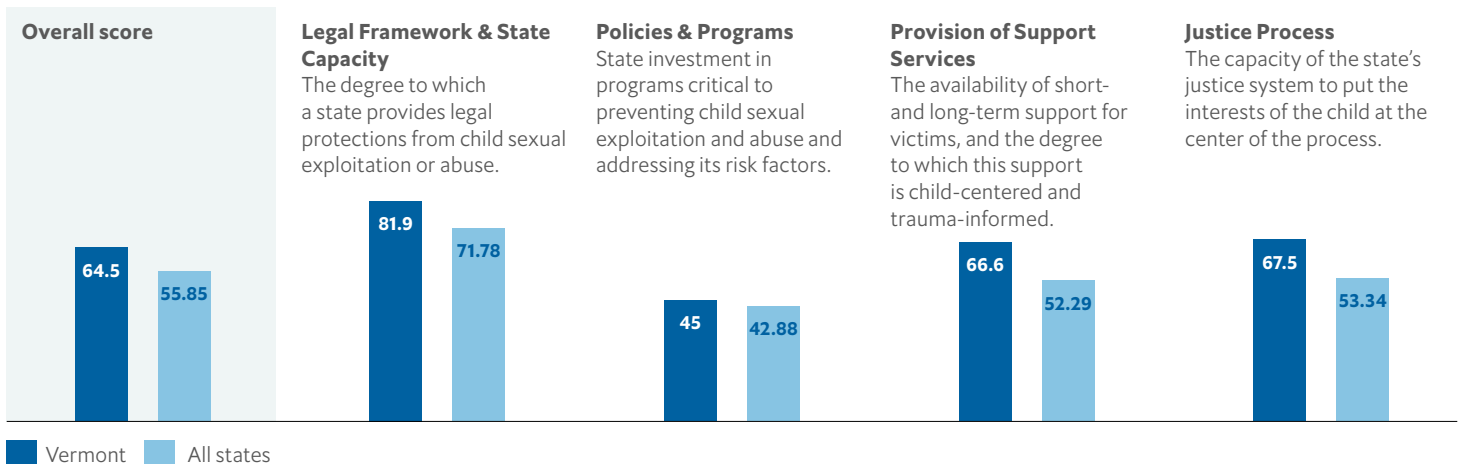
What more needs to be done?

Data gaps: While Vermont publishes annual reports with data reported cases of CSAE, it does not collect nor publish any prevalence data, nor data on the number of arrests, charges and the backlog of CSEA-related cases.

Sex education remains unresponsive to public health needs: While Vermont mandates that children receive sex and HIV/STI education, and instruction on contraception, it does not mandate this education to be medically accurate, evidence based, or culturally responsive.

Lack of sensitivity to social environment: Vermont permits minors younger than 18 to be married with parental consent.² Furthermore, while Vermont prohibits female genital mutilation (FGM), it does not exclude cultural reasons as a defense and has no specific community education and outreach on the issue.

Index scores



1 <https://states.guttmacher.org/policies/Vermont/abortion-policies>
 2 https://www.guttmacher.org/sites/default/files/report_pdf/parentalinvolvementlaws.pdf

Out of the shadows: Shining light on the response to child sexual abuse and exploitation

Indicator	Score/100	Indicator	Score/100	
Prevention		Response		
	63.4		66.9	
1.1)	Gender Equality, Gender Protection and Marriage Laws	59.2	3.1) Support - Child Welfare	26.1
1.2)	Consent Laws	100	3.2) Support - Immediate Support and Recovery	75.1
1.3)	Laws Against CSEA	79.3	3.3) Rehabilitation & Prevention	50
1.4)	Exemptions & Qualifiers	90.5	3.4) Children's Response to Online Sexual Harms	94.1
1.5)	Background Checks/Disqualifications	95	4.1) Child-Centered Emergency Response	63
1.6)	Data Availability	60	4.2) Police Capacity	40.3
2.1)	Building Individual Skills & Knowledge	54.8	4.3) Integrated Response and Coordination	100
2.2)	Educating Providers	50	4.4) Judicial Processes	41.7
2.3)	Promoting Community Education	33.3	4.5) Legal Representation & Advocacy	92.9
2.4)	Fostering Coalitions & Networks	0	4.6) Monitoring & Evaluation	57.1
2.5)	Changing Organizational Practice	30		
2.6)	Influencing Policy & Legislation	66.4		

 First quartile (100-75)	 Second quartile (74.9-50)
 Third quartile (49.9-25)	 Fourth quartile (24.9-0)

For a full explanation of indicators, weightings and more detailed information on Vermont's performance, please see the interactive Excel model available on the [US pilot index website](#).

In addition to the full methodology, a report outlining the overall findings is also available.

What is the Out of the Shadows Index?

The World Childhood Foundation USA's (Childhood USA) US pilot Out of the Shadows Index, developed by Economist Impact, examines how stakeholders are responding to the threat of child sexual abuse and exploitation in 12 states. It does not attempt to measure the scale of the problem or incorporate information on the prevalence of sexual violence against children in each state. Rather it uses 182 individual metrics aggregated into 22 indicators and grouped into four categories to measure the extent to which states are acknowledging the problem of sexual violence against children, and whether they are implementing measures to prevent and address the problem holistically.

While the US pilot index can help highlight key areas for attention, existing resources such as the Center for Disease Control's [Technical Package on Preventing Child Abuse and Neglect](#) and [Prevent Child Abuse America](#) offer more detailed information and support for implementation of solutions.

Please use the following when citing this state profile:

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