

## School Immunization Survey Data 2017–2018

Summary prepared for Connecticut General Assembly  
May 16, 2019

Thank you for organizing the Informational Hearing on the State's Religious Exemption to Children's Immunizations on May 13, 2019. As requested by legislators in attendance during my oral testimony, below is a summary of the School Immunization Survey Data released by the Connecticut State Department of Public Health on May 10, 2019.

### Executive Summary:

The current national epidemic of measles including many cases in neighboring New York leaves Connecticut vulnerable to outbreaks due to clusters of unvaccinated children in our schools. Nearly 20% of schools in Connecticut do not have sufficient coverage with measles, mumps, rubella (MMR) vaccine to prevent measles outbreaks from occurring. These schools are in all 8 counties. Religious exemptions to school entry requirements are also high in many schools: nearly 10% of schools have more than 5% of kindergarten students with religious exemptions (compared to the national average of 1.5%). Religious exemptions have been steadily increasing in Connecticut over the past 6 years.

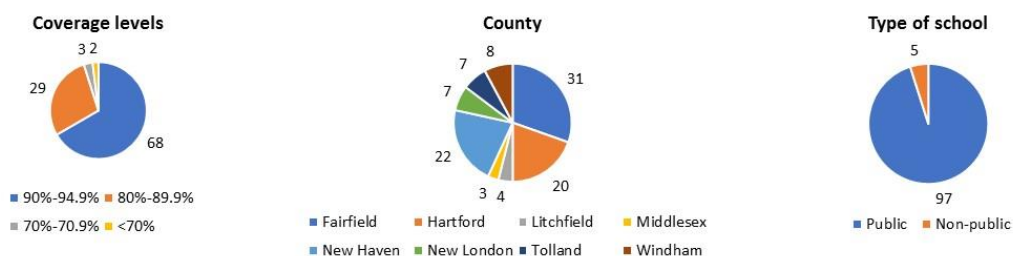
### Summary of School Immunization Survey Data:

Available at <https://portal.ct.gov/DPH/Immunizations/School-Survey>.

Immunization data were available for 555 schools with >30 kindergarten students enrolled.

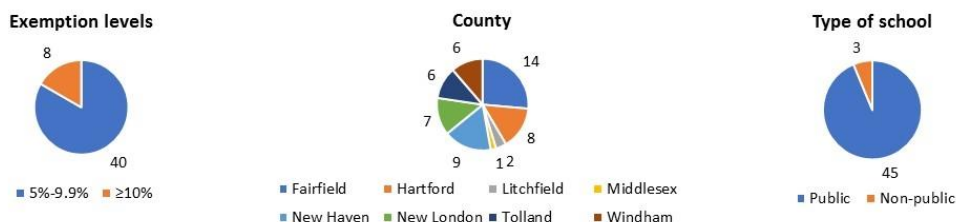
A total of **102 schools (18.4% of those with available data) have vaccination coverage for measles, mumps and rubella (MMR) below 95%** among students entering kindergarten, the level needed for herd immunity. Herd immunity protects entire populations (including those who cannot be vaccinated) when coverage is high enough to prevent infectious diseases from spreading in populations. Figure 1 shows that these schools exist in all counties, and some schools have coverage far below 95%.

Figure 1. Numbers of Connecticut schools with measles, mumps, rubella vaccination coverage less than 95% (n=102) among kindergarten students, 2017–2018. Source: Connecticut Department of Public Health

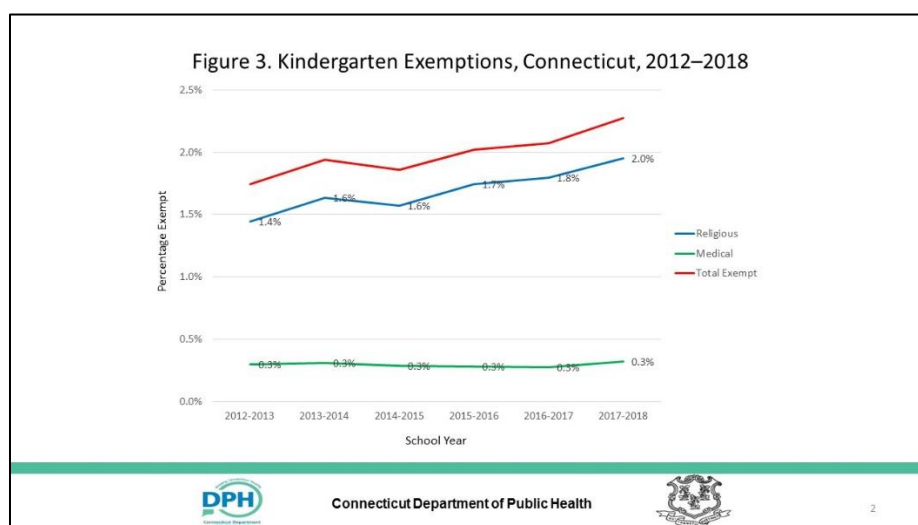


A total of **48 schools (8.6% of those with available data) have non-medical (religious) exemption rates that are greater than or equal to 5.0%** among students entering kindergarten. Nationally, the rate of non-medical exemptions in states that only allow religious exemptions (as in Connecticut) is 1.5% (Omer SB et al. *Open Forum in Infectious Diseases* 2018). Figure 2 shows these schools by exemption rate, county, and type of school

Figure 2. Numbers of Connecticut schools with non-medical (religious) exemption rates greater than 5% (n=48) among kindergarten students, 2017–2018. Source: Connecticut Department of Public Health



Religious exemption rates in Connecticut are steadily increasing, from 1.4% in 2012–2013 to 2.0% in 2017–2018, reflecting a 43% increase in the past 6 years (Figure 3).



## **Conclusions:**

Nearly 20% of schools in Connecticut have <95% coverage with MMR vaccine among kindergarten students, and nearly 10% of schools have ≥5% with religious exemptions, a rate that reflects increases in recent years. Clusters of children who are intentionally unvaccinated create a situation where measles outbreaks can begin and spread in communities.

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