

Only 41 Children for Every 100 Housing Units in the U.S., on Average

February Special Study for HousingEconomics.com

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BACKGROUND

In discussions regarding new residential development, a longstanding misconception often arises: these developments attract households with many school age children, which can result in overcrowded schools and inflated local education budgets.

In the US, some local governments charge builders impact fees to cover infrastructure costs associated with the estimated number of children in new developments entering the public education system. Twenty-nine out of the 50 states have legislation allowing for local governments to impose fees based on this criteria.¹ For this reason, builders have an interest in ensuring that the number of children associated with each residential development type is accurately estimated. Producing estimates of the number of children in new developments is also beneficial for local governments so they can better reconcile local education costs.²

Using the US Census Bureau's 2015 American Community Survey, The National Association of Home Builders' (NAHB) calculated, on average, how many school age children (defined as children between the ages of 5 and 18) live in different types of residential developments, including single-family and multifamily developments. Calculations of the average number of children in different residential units is also analyzed by household characteristics, such as mobility and tenure. The data findings are described throughout this special study.

¹ http://www.impactfees.com/publications%20pdf/state_enabling_acts.pdf

² <http://www.capenet.org/facts.html>. Data from the 2013-2014 school year shows that on average, about 10 percent of US children are enrolled in private school. This should be accounted for when calculating the marginal cost of a school age child entering a local public school system.

FINDINGS

Table 1 shows the tabulation of the number of school age children by residential development type and by different household characteristics. Most evident from the data is that, on average, there is less than one child in homes of all types: 41.1 children per 100 housing units. The following are other key findings from **Table 1**.

- Owner-occupied units have fewer children than renter-occupied units: 45.6 children per 100 owner-occupied units compared to 49.6 children per 100 renter-occupied units.
- For most residential types, there are fewer children in new construction compared to in existing units. In newly constructed single-family attached units there is an average of only 30.2 children per 100 units, compared to 45.2 per 100 existing units. In newly constructed multifamily developments, there is an average of 21.9 children per 100 units, compared to 26.3 per 100 existing units.
- Large multifamily developments have fewer children: for multifamily developments with 20+ units, the average number of children living in them is only 16.7 per 100 units, compared to multifamily developments with 2 to 4 units, which have 35.7 children per 100 units.

Other findings from this study show that:

- Multifamily units with 1 bedroom or less have the least amount of children compared to multifamily units with more bedrooms: 7.7 children per 100 one bedroom multifamily units, compared to 71.6 children per 100 three or more bedroom multifamily units.
- A regional breakdown shows that, on average, many states in the Northeast region, including Vermont, Maine, and New Hampshire, have the fewest number of children living in housing units.

Table 1.
Average Number of School Age Children per 100 Housing Units
By Structure Type

	Type of Structure			
	All	Single-Family Detached	Single-Family Attached	Manufactured Housing
All Housing Units	41.1	47.8	38.3	38.3
All Occupied Units	46.9	53.5	42.7	48.6
Recent Movers	42.9	62.4	44.9	53.4
Into New Construction	47.1	61.5	30.2	59.8
Into Existing Units	42.8	62.4	45.2	53.2
Non-Movers	47.5	52.7	42.3	48.0
Owner Occupied Units	45.6	48.7	29.8	43.0
Recent Movers	46.4	52.1	24.7	44.3
Into New Construction	56.0	60.8	24.4	54.3
Into Existing Units	45.9	51.6	24.7	43.9
Non-Movers	45.6	48.5	30.2	42.9
Renter Occupied Units	49.6	82.1	64.2	66.0
Recent Movers	41.7	76.2	54.7	59.7
Into New Construction	30.4	71.7	49.1	73.2
Into Existing Units	41.8	76.2	54.8	59.6
Non-Movers	52.5	84.0	67.6	68.1

	Type of Structure			
	Multifamily (All)	2-4 Unit Multifamily	5-19 Unit Multifamily	20+ Unit Multifamily
All Housing Units	27.0	35.7	29.1	16.7
All Occupied Units	31.5	42.0	33.8	19.4
Recent Movers	26.3	36.1	28.6	15.3
Into New Construction	21.9	34.1	31.6	11.3
Into Existing Units	26.3	36.1	28.5	15.4
Non-Movers	33.3	43.6	35.9	20.8
Owner Occupied Units	18.5	28.9	15.0	9.4
Recent Movers	16.5	24.8	16.9	9.4
Into New Construction	25.4	38.6	14.4	***
Into Existing Units	16.4	24.5	16.9	9.4
Non-Movers	18.7	29.3	14.8	9.4
Renter Occupied Units	33.5	44.8	35.8	21.0
Recent Movers	26.7	36.7	29.0	15.5
Into New Construction	21.5	33.4	32.4	11.0
Into Existing Units	26.7	36.7	28.9	15.6
Non-Movers	36.1	47.5	38.7	23.0

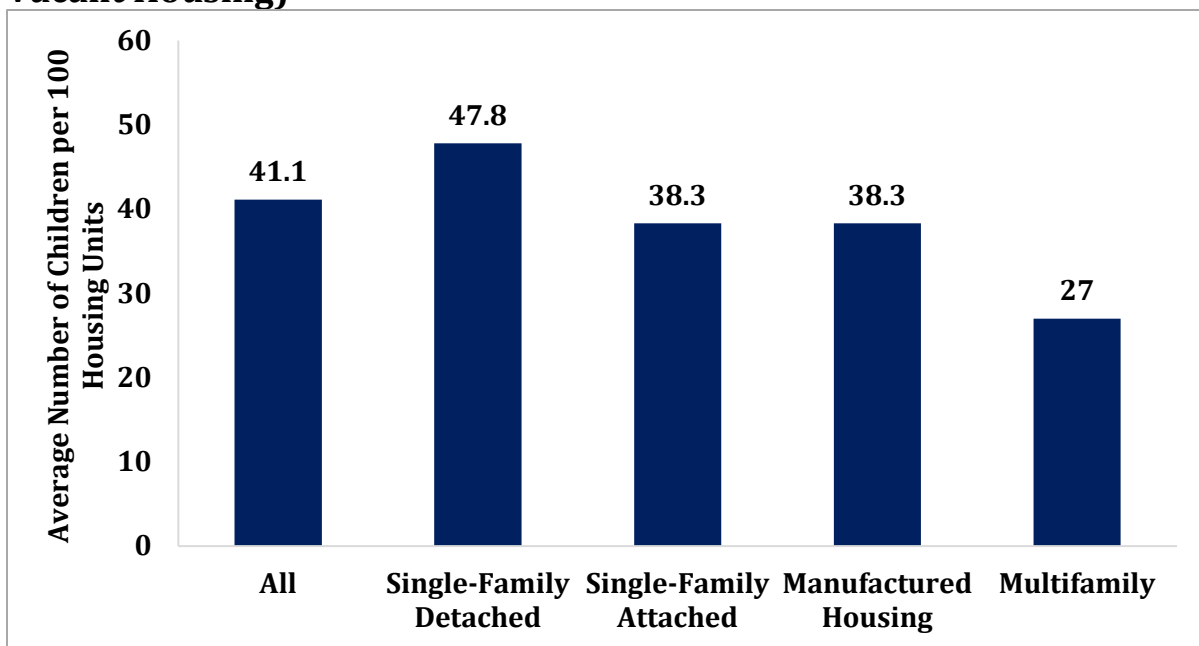
*** The number for this cell is suppressed because it is based on a small number of observations.

Average of Under One Child in Homes of All Types

Table 1 displays the number of children in all housing units, or occupied units combined with vacant units. The most prominent finding from the data is that, on average, there is less than one child per housing unit: 41.1 per 100 housing units. When excluding vacant housing, the average number of children increases, but only slightly, to 46.9 children per 100 occupied units.

Among residential development types, single-family detached units have an average of 47.8 children per 100 housing units, compared to 38.3 for both single-family attached and manufactured housing units, and 27 children per 100 multifamily housing units (**Figure 1**).

Figure 1: Average Number of Children per 100 Housing Units (Includes Vacant Housing)



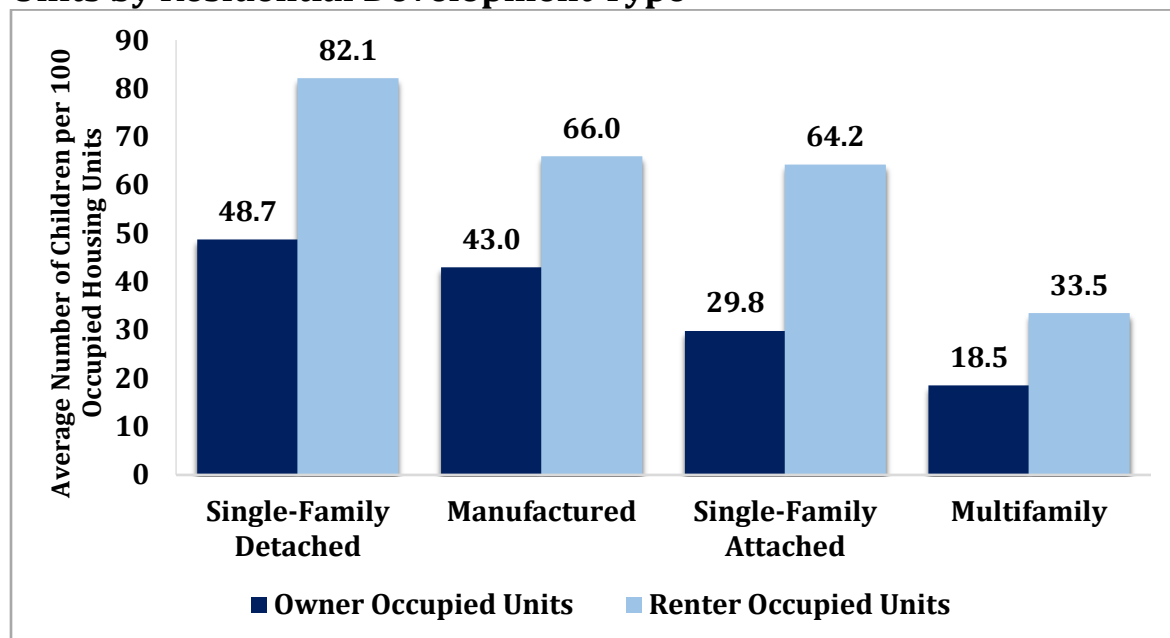
Home Owners Have Fewer Children

It is well documented that households in renter-occupied units and owner-occupied units have different demographic characteristics, such as [age and income](#).³ In this case, households in owner-occupied units have fewer children compared to those in renter-occupied units for all residential types.

Figure 2 displays the number of children in owner- and renter-occupied units by residential development type. The difference between the number of children in renter versus occupied units is most significant for single-family units (detached and attached).

For single family-detached, there are only 48.7 children per 100 owner-occupied units, compared to 82.1 children per 100 renter-occupied units. For single-family attached, there are only 29.8 for every 100 owner-occupied units, compared to 64.2 for every 100 renter-occupied units.

Figure 2: Average Number of Children in Renter- and Owner-Occupied Units by Residential Development Type



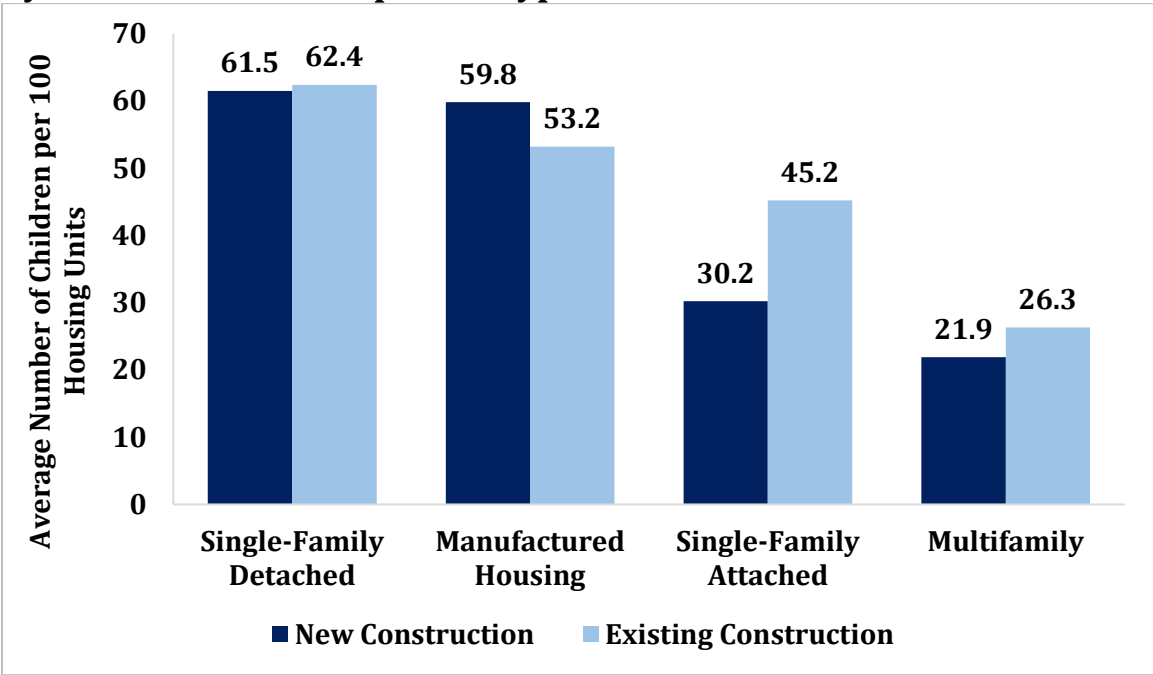
³ <http://eyeonhousing.org/2014/04/characteristics-of-owners-and-renters/>

For Most Residential Types, There Are Fewer Children in New Construction Compared to in Existing Units

Differences in the number of children in housing units can also be observed by structure age. **Figure 3** displays the number of children in both new construction (units built in either 2014 or 2015), and existing construction (units built before 2014). For most residential development types, there are fewer children in new construction compared to in existing construction.

For single-family detached, there are slightly more children in existing units at 62.4 per 100 units, compared to 61.5 per 100 in new units. For single-family attached, there are only 30.2 children per 100 new units, compared to 45.2 in existing units. For multifamily units, there are 21.9 children per 100 new units, compared to 26.3 per 100 existing units. The only residential type with more children in new construction compared to in existing is manufactured housing: 59.8 children in 100 new units compared to 53.2 in existing units.

Figure 3: Average Number of Children in New and Existing Construction by Residential Development Type



Fewest Number of Children in One Bedroom Apartments

Table 2 displays a breakdown of the number of children in multifamily units by the number of bedrooms. On average, units with 1 bedroom or less have the least number of children at 7.7 children per 100 units, followed by 2 bedrooms units with 31.4 children per 100 units, and three or more bedroom units with 71.6 children per 100 units.

When further examining multifamily units with three or more bedrooms, it is clear that significantly fewer children live in owner-occupied units compared to in renter-occupied units: 40.2 children versus 98 children per 100 units, respectively.

On average, multifamily units with 3 or more bedrooms have more children, but it is important to note that the share of multifamily unit completions with 3 or more bedrooms is small, [representing only 12 percent](#) of total multifamily completions in 2014.⁴

Table 2.
Average Number of School Age Children per 100 Housing Units

	By Number of Bedrooms in Housing Unit			
	Multifamily (All)	1 bedroom or less	2 bedrooms	3 or more bedrooms
All Housing Units	27.0	7.7	31.4	71.6
All Occupied Units	31.5	9.1	36.7	83.3
Recent Movers	26.3	6.6	31.9	81.0
Into New Construction	21.9	3.8	22.3	83.8
Into Existing Units	26.3	6.6	32.0	81.0
Non-Movers	33.3	10.0	38.3	83.8
Owner Occupied Units	18.5	11.4	13.2	40.2
Recent Movers	16.5	9.7	14.0	38.6
Into New Construction	25.4	23.1	13.3	29.9
Into Existing Units	16.4	9.6	14.0	38.9
Non-Movers	18.7	11.6	13.2	40.4
Renter Occupied Units	33.5	8.8	41.2	98.0
Recent Movers	26.7	6.4	33.1	84.6
Into New Construction	21.5	3.5	22.1	100.6
Into Existing Units	26.7	6.5	33.2	84.4
Non-Movers	36.1	9.8	44.3	102.6

⁴ <http://eyeonhousing.org/2015/10/rising-construction-share-of-one-bedroom-apartments/>

Among States (and District), Fewest Number of Children in Vermont, Maine, and District of Columbia

In addition to national level data, **Appendix I** (available in the “Additional Resources” box that appears at the top of the online version of this article) provides detailed tabulations of the number of children in housing units in each state (including the District of Columbia). **Table 3** displays the states with the fewest number of children per 100 housing units.

Table 3: States with the Fewest Average Number of Children in Housing Units

Rank	State	Average Number of School Age Children per 100 Housing Units
1	Vermont	25.8
1	Maine	25.8
3	District of Columbia	26.5
4	Florida	31.9
5	Montana	32.3
6	New Hampshire	33.1
6	West Virginia	33.1
8	South Carolina	34.4
9	Rhode Island	34.9
10	Alabama	35.8

When observing the ranking, it is evident that several New England states are among the states with the fewest number of children in housing units, including Vermont, Maine, New Hampshire, and Rhode Island.

Vermont and Maine have the fewest at 25.8 children per 100 housing units, followed by the District of Columbia, which has only 26.5 children per 100 housing units. **Figure 4** is a heat map showing differences in the number of children in all housing units by state.

Figure 4: US Map of the Average Number of Children per 100 Housing Units

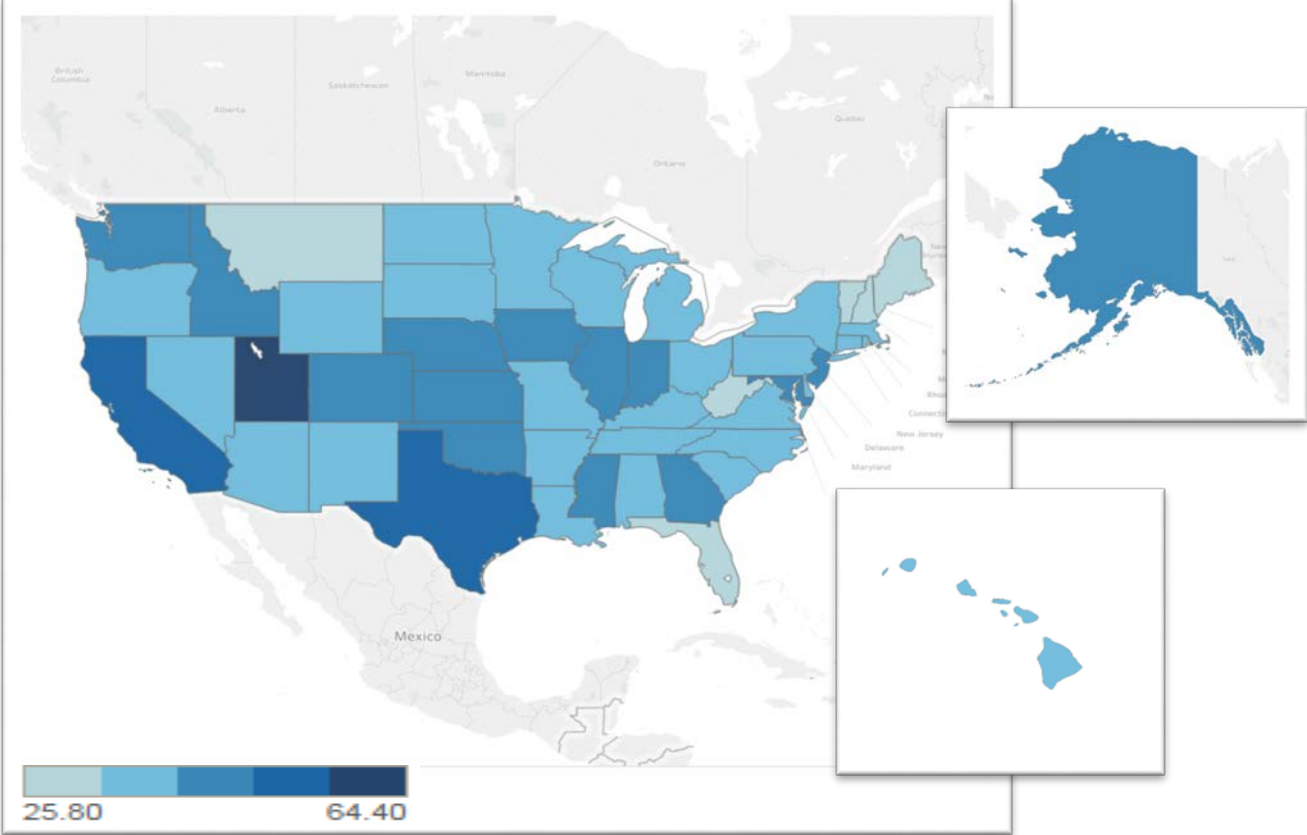


Table 4 shows the states with the fewest number of children in single-family detached units. Maine has the fewest per 100 housing units: 28.4, followed by Vermont (28.5), and West Virginia (34.5). These states were also among the states with the fewest number of children in all housing units (**Table 3**).

Table 4: States with Fewest Average Number of Children in Single-Family Detached Units

Rank	State	Average Children Per 100 Single-Family Detached Units
1	Maine	28.4
2	Vermont	28.5
3	West Virginia	34.5
4	Montana	35.9
5	South Carolina	37.9
6	Alabama	38.4
7	New Hampshire	38.8
8	Rhode Island	40.2
9	Florida	40.5
10	Louisiana	41.0

States with the fewest average number of children in multifamily units differs from those with the fewest in single-family detached. **Table 5** shows that several states with the fewest number of children in multifamily developments are in the West North Central Region (South Dakota, North Dakota, and Nebraska) and the upper Mountain Region (Montana, and Idaho). South Dakota has the fewest average number of children in multifamily units: 13.9 per 100 units, followed by Montana (14.4) and North Dakota (15.8).

Table 5: States with Fewest Average Number of Children in Multifamily Units

Rank	State	Average Children Per 100 Multifamily Units
1	South Dakota	13.9
2	Montana	14.4
3	North Dakota	15.8
4	Vermont	15.9
5	Nebraska	16.1
6	Idaho	16.1
7	Maine	16.7
8	Missouri	16.8
9	Pennsylvania	17.0
10	Michigan	17.2

Conclusion

The estimate of the number of children in housing units is an important statistic for both builders and local governments because, in many cases, it is a factor in determining the cost of impact fees. The NAHB analysis revealed the following findings:

- On average, there is less than one child per housing unit in the US.
- There are fewer children in owner-occupied units, compared to in renter-occupied units.
- For most types of residential development, there are fewer children in new construction compared to in existing units.
- In multifamily developments, fewer children reside in units with 1 bedroom or less, compared to units with 2 or more bedrooms.
- There are fewer children living in housing units in many Northeast states compared to states in other regions of the country.