

# DataHaven

## Classroom Materials

**Title of Material:** Health in Connecticut: Asthma

**Topics Discussed:** Health, healthcare, asthma, health inequalities, education inequalities

**Skills Utilized:** Reading skills, data analysis, reflection questions

**Format:** Individual or with partners

**In Person or Online:** Either

**Procedure/Instruction Suggestions:**

This is a specific look at a well known and common ailment that is a part of the persistent health inequalities in Connecticut.

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# Health in Connecticut: Asthma

**Directions:** Read the following information and data about asthma and its impact in Connecticut. Then, answer the thought questions.

**Background:** Asthma, a condition that makes it difficult to breathe, can range from being a minor disturbance in daily life to a life threatening burden. It is generally treated with inhalers and steroids, as well as strict management of symptoms and triggers. Across Connecticut, one in seven, or 14 percent, of children in the public school system have asthma. Childhood asthma affects children’s quality of life and performance in school and it can be fatal if left untreated.

According to the State of Connecticut Department of Public Health’s School-Based Asthma Surveillance Report of 2019, on average from 2012 to 2014, 17 percent of **Greater Hartford** public school students had asthma, above the statewide rate of 14 percent. Levels of childhood asthma were generally lower in **Greater New Haven** public schools than statewide between 2012 and 2014. However, these rates differ from town to town, county to county. For example, rates of childhood asthma in most Greater Hartford public school districts fell below the statewide average, including in Wethersfield, Avon, Glastonbury, and Marlborough, where the rates were lower than 9 percent. On the other hand, at least 20 percent of the students in New Britain, Hartford, Tolland, Vernon, Windsor, and Manchester public schools had asthma. Rates of childhood asthma in most Greater New Haven public school districts fell below the statewide average as well, including in Orange, Woodbridge, and Milford, where the rates were lower than 8 percent. However, rates in New Haven, East Haven, and West Haven were above 12 percent.

Asthma can also impact a child’s education, as factors that contribute to chronic absenteeism may include individual predictors such as asthma and other chronic diseases. It can also impact their ability to participate in sports, participate in outdoor gym class or recess, and makes them more “at risk” if they catch a disease like COVID-19. It can also impact their self esteem, their confidence, and lead to bullying.

## Asthma prevalence by public school district

CT DPH SCHOOL-BASED ASTHMA SURVEILLANCE, 2012–2014

SCHOOL DISTRICT <sup>211</sup>	ASTHMA PREVALENCE
Connecticut	14.3%
Greater Hartford	17.1%
Hartford	23.5%
New Britain	27.7%
GH Inner Ring	16.3%
East Hartford	19.5%
Manchester	20.5%
West Hartford	14.1%
GH Outer Ring	12.4%

## Asthma prevalence by public school district

CT DPH SCHOOL-BASED ASTHMA SURVEILLANCE, 2012–2014

SCHOOL DISTRICT <sup>211</sup>	ASTHMA PREVALENCE
Connecticut	14.3%
Greater New Haven	12.0%
New Haven	14.7%
Inner Ring	11.7%
East Haven	13.1%
Hamden	10.5%
West Haven	12.2%
Outer Ring	9.7%
Milford	7.9%

### **Thought Questions:**

1. Compare the rates of asthma prevalence in Greater Hartford and Greater New Haven school districts. What do you notice? What sticks out to you?
2. Why is having data from the different school districts within the two counties important? What does it allow us to do?
3. How can comparing asthma prevalence help Connecticut inform healthcare decisions for its citizens?