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## **1.7 Million More Children Live in Low-Income Working Families Today Than in Midst of Great Recession**

Rising Tide of Economic Recovery Did Not Lift All Boats — It Left Millions Shipwrecked, According to New *KIDS COUNT Data Book*

*State and federal policies that focus simultaneously on children and their parents can help more families enjoy the nation's growing prosperity*

Hartford – About 1.7 million more children live in low-income working families today than during the Great Recession, according to the newly released 2015 *KIDS COUNT® Data Book* from the [Annie E. Casey Foundation](#). In 2013, one in four children, 18.7 million, lived in a low-income working family in the United States. Nearly a third of children are living in families where no parent has full-time employment. And even when parents are working full time, wages and benefits are often not sufficient to adequately support a family.

In Connecticut alone 13,000 more children live in low-income families compared to 2008, during the recession. Twenty-nine percent of children live in families where parents lack secure employment, a 17% increase from 2008.

The 2015 *Data Book*, which focuses on key trends in child well-being in the post-recession years, measures child well-being in four domains: economic well-being, education, health, and family and community. The Casey Foundation report finds that the rising tide of recovery, with both increased employment and more concentrated wealth, has left stagnant pockets of low-income, struggling communities and families, where a child's future is anchored in scarcity and hardship.

“Although we are several years past the end of the recession, millions of families still have not benefited from the economic recovery,” said Patrick McCarthy, president and CEO of the Casey Foundation. “While we’ve seen an increase in employment in recent years, many of these jobs are low-wage and cannot support even basic family expenses. Far too many families are still struggling to provide for the day-to-day needs of their children, notably for the 16 million kids who are living in poverty. We can and must do better: we can make policy choices to lift more families into economic stability.”

### **National and State Rankings for 2015 *Data Book***

For the first time in a nearly a decade, a non-New England state ranks number one for overall child well-being. Minnesota holds the top spot, followed by New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Iowa, and Vermont. Arizona, Nevada, Louisiana, New Mexico and

Mississippi rank lowest. Connecticut ranks sixth, up one spot from last year. The high ranking, however, hides the huge disparities among whites, Hispanics and African-Americans in the state, as well as the increasingly concentrated poverty in urban centers. 71,000 children in Connecticut live in high-poverty areas, a 29% increase since the beginning of the recession.

Other state highlights:

- While three New England states rank within the top five for overall well-being among the 50 states, the top five states in the area of economic well-being are in the heartland and Plain States regions — North Dakota, Wyoming, Nebraska, Iowa and Minnesota.
- The biggest improvements in overall rankings compared to last year's *Data Book* are seen in Alaska, Minnesota, Wyoming, South Carolina and Missouri. The biggest drops in overall rankings are seen in West Virginia, Indiana, Rhode Island, Virginia, Arkansas and Vermont.
- Southeast, Southwest and Appalachian states have the lowest income and are at the bottom of the overall rankings. With the exception of California, the 15 lowest-ranked states were in these regions.

### **Poverty is Persistent in Many Neighborhoods**

Despite being several years into the economic recovery, one in five children remains stranded in poverty.

- Since 2008, the number of children living in poverty has risen by almost 3 million, from 13.2 million to 16.1 million today.
- At a rate of 22 percent in 2013, the rate of child poverty is still several percentage points higher than before the recession, when it was 18 percent. The child poverty rate in Connecticut has climbed from 12% to 15% during this period.

The number of children living in high-poverty neighborhoods — where poverty rates are more than 30 percent — is the highest since 1990:

- Today, one in seven children — 14 percent — live in high-poverty communities.
- More than 2 million more children live in areas of concentrated poverty today than in 2006-2010.

### **Recovery sidesteps children of color**

Race is one of the strongest factors influencing a child's economic stability. Data show the economic recovery of the past several years has bypassed many children of color. Rates of unemployment at the close of 2014 were in single digits for all races except African Americans. African Americans were also the only group for whom unemployment remains higher than before the recession.

- African-American children are twice as likely as the average child to live in high-poverty neighborhoods and to live in single-parent families.

- American Indian children are twice as likely to lack health insurance coverage.
- Latino children are the most likely to live with a household head who lacks a high school diploma.

“Racial disparities are especially pronounced in Connecticut – our state is the second most unequal in the country,” said Roger Senserrich, policy director at the Connecticut Association for Human Services. “Only 6% of White children live in poverty, compared to 28% Blacks or 33% for Hispanics. Poverty is extremely concentrated in a few cities, as well – half of the children living in poverty live in just five communities – Hartford, Bridgeport, New Britain, New Haven, and Waterbury.”

### **Solutions that provide opportunity for all children**

National and state level policies have proved that investments in health and education can create lasting positive differences for children. The Children’s Health Insurance Program (CHIP), which provides low-cost health coverage to children, was implemented 15 years ago and has drastically reduced the number of children without health insurance. In addition, tax credits and food stamps have helped to lift people out of poverty; however even with these resources, millions of low-income families still struggle with basic provisioning for their children.

The Casey Foundation offers a number of recommendations to make good on the American promise of opportunity for all children. The Foundation promotes a two-generation strategy that simultaneously addresses the needs of children directly while providing tools and resources to their parents. Three critical strategies include:

- Provide parents with multiple pathways to get family-supporting jobs and achieve financial stability.
- Ensure access to high-quality early childhood education and enriching elementary school experiences.
- Equip parents to better support their children socially and emotionally and to advocate for their kids' education.

The Casey Foundation recommends policies that promote higher pay, paid sick leave, flexible scheduling and expanded unemployment benefits that will result in higher family income, reduced parental stress and an increased capacity of parents to invest in their kids. Detailed recommendations can be found in the 2014 report, [Creating Opportunity for Families: A Two-Generation Approach](#).

*The 2015 Data Book* will be available July 21 at 12:01 a.m. EDT at [www.aecf.org](http://www.aecf.org). Additional information is available at <http://datacenter.kidscount.org>, which also contains the most recent national, state and local data on hundreds of indicators of child well-being. The Data Center allows users to create rankings, maps and graphs for use in publications and on websites, and to view real-time information on mobile devices, <http://mobile.kidscount.org>.

*The Annie E. Casey Foundation creates a brighter future for the nation’s children by developing solutions to strengthen families, build paths to economic opportunity and transform struggling communities into safer and healthier places to live, work and grow.*

*For more information, visit [www.aecf.org](http://www.aecf.org). KIDS COUNT<sup>®</sup> is a registered trademark of the Annie E. Casey Foundation.*

*The Connecticut Association for Human Services (CAHS) works to end poverty, and to engage, equip, and empower all families in Connecticut to build a secure future. For more information, visit [www.cahs.org](http://www.cahs.org).*

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