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UNDER EMBARGO until Tuesday, July 21, 2015, 12:01 a.m. EDT

More Michigan kids live in poverty now than during Great Recession

Michigan slips again in state rankings for child well-being, now 33rd

LANSING, Mich. – While most states have seen improvements in child well-being over the past five years, families in Michigan continue to suffer with more children living in poverty now than in the last full year of the Great Recession, according to the new 2015 *KIDS COUNT*[®] *Data Book* released today from [the Annie E. Casey Foundation](#).

More than 524,000 Michigan children live in poverty, a rate of one in four, compared to one in five in 2008. The number of children in families where no parent has full-time employment also is up, from 31 percent to 33 percent. And the state's rank in overall child well-being fell for the second year in a row, placing it behind 32 other states including all of its Great Lakes neighbors: Minnesota (1st), Wisconsin (13th), Illinois (20th), Ohio (23rd) and Indiana (32nd).

“The economic recovery clearly has not reached everyone,” said Gilda Z. Jacobs, president & CEO of the Michigan League for Public Policy. “Michigan’s unemployment rate may be at the lowest it’s been in the past decade, but many of these new jobs are low-wage and too many families continue to struggle to make ends meet to care for their children. This report proves that Michigan is losing ground while other states prosper and this is not the direction we need to go.”

The 2015 *Data Book*, which focuses on key trends in child well-being in the post-recession years, ranks Michigan in four domains:

- Economic well-being: 33rd
- Education: 37th
- Family and community: 29th
- Health: 23rd

Michigan’s worst ranking was in education, where preschool attendance and fourth-grade reading proficiency has dropped since 2008. Recent expansions and state investments in early childhood programs and in early literacy programs will help address these issues, and Michigan should begin to see some improvement in these areas.

A stark reality highlighted in the report is the widening economic gap among children of color, with almost one in every two African American children and nearly one in every three Latino children in Michigan living in poverty. Children living in high-poverty neighborhoods – where poverty rates are more than 30 percent – also increased, from 14 percent in 2006-10 to 17 percent in 2009-13. The number of children in single-parent families jumped from 32 percent in 2008 to 36 percent in 2013, accounting for 767,000 children.

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On the positive side, Michigan saw a 16 percent improvement in the number of children living in households with a high housing cost burden, dropping from 38 percent in 2008 to 32 percent in 2013, and continued reduction of teen births, although Michigan's rank fell from 13th to 19th among states. Slight improvement also was noted in eighth-grade math, and on-time graduation with more significant improvements in child and teen death rates, teen substance use, the number of children without health insurance, and low-birthweight babies.

"Progress was made because of policy changes and concerted effort, so we know that with political will, we can help families thrive," said Alicia Guevara Warren, Kids Count in Michigan project director. "Policymakers can help improve outcomes for children in Michigan by ensuring that their parents have the tools and support they need to raise healthy, educated and skilled children for Michigan's future."

Among recommendations to improve Michigan's child well-being:

- Invest in two-generation strategies that improve access to opportunities for parents, such as increased funding for adult education and training, which will lead to higher-wage jobs with benefits and regular schedules, and improvements in the child care subsidy program to ensure quality, flexible and affordable child care while parents attend school or work. A better public transportation system also would help ensure that parents get to work and school.
- Continue a strong investment in education with a particular focus on early childhood initiatives, such as home visitation and Early On.
- Support a fair tax system that includes the state Earned Income Tax Credit, a well-evidenced poverty reduction tool, along with making key provisions of the federal EITC and Child Tax Credit permanent before they expire.
- Invest in strategies to reduce the 8.2 percent of Michigan babies born too small, particularly in communities of color.
- Strengthen safety net programs that provide temporary relief to families experiencing economic hardship by removing barriers such as asset limits and misguided truancy policies so families have the tools and resources to improve outcomes for their children.

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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.

For more information: KIDS COUNT Data Center, which is home to comprehensive national, state and local statistics on child well-being. KIDS COUNT® is a registered trademark of the Annie E. Casey Foundation.

The Michigan League for Public Policy, www.mlpp.org, is a state level policy institute dedicated to economic opportunity for all.