



State of Connecticut
GENERAL ASSEMBLY



Commission on Children

Child Poverty in Connecticut 2005

Great wealth, persistent poverty

Despite Connecticut's great wealth, 1 in 10 children lives in poverty.

- Connecticut is one of the wealthiest states in the nation, which compounded with its highly skilled workforce, makes the cost of living very high.¹ The state was one of five states in the nation with the highest median household income in 2002-2004.²
- One in 10 (10.5%) Connecticut children under 18 (87,000 children) in 2004 lived in a family with income below the Federal Poverty Level (\$19,307 for a family of four), unchanged from the 2003 percentage.³

Child poverty rate is unchanged despite welfare changes.

- The 2004 child poverty estimate for Connecticut represents no progress over the 1990 child poverty rate of 10.4%, despite record-low unemployment in the 1990s and an aggressive effort to move welfare recipients into the workplace.⁴

Poverty in Connecticut is concentrated in urban areas.

- Children living in poverty are unevenly distributed across Connecticut's 169 towns. While 38 towns had child poverty rates of less than 2% in the 2000 Census, seven towns had a rate above 23%, led by Hartford at 41.3%.⁵
- The state's capital city -- Hartford -- has the second highest child poverty rate in the nation among cities with population exceeding 100,000 (behind Brownsville, Texas; 2000 Census). Three other Connecticut cities (New Haven, Bridgeport, Waterbury) joined Hartford among the 84 cities with the highest child poverty rates in the nation.⁶

Most low-income Connecticut families work, yet employment is at low wages.

- Three-quarters (76%) of Connecticut's poor families with a parent able to work have a parent in the workforce (2003 data). Employment is not adequate to lift these working families out of poverty.⁷

The 'two Connecticuts'

The gap between high-wage and low-wage workers is growing.

- Real (inflation-adjusted) wages for Connecticut's highest wage workers (at the 90th percentile), increased 20% between 1990 and 2004, while wages of lowest-wage workers (at the 10% percentile) declined by 2%. The increase for high-wage workers was double the increase for median-wage workers (10%) over this period.⁸

Minority children are more likely to live in poverty.

- Latino children in Connecticut are seven times more likely to live in poverty than white, non-Hispanic youth. African-American children are six times more likely to live in poverty.⁹ Nearly three-quarters (74%) of Connecticut's children are white/non-Hispanic and one quarter (26%) are African American or Hispanic. However, nearly three-quarters (73%) of children living in poverty are African American or Hispanic.¹⁰

Educational challenges for low-income children begin with access to quality preschool.

- Children growing up poor in Connecticut perform on educational tests at a much lower level than do higher-income children. The 2003 Nation's Report Card indicates that Connecticut has some of the largest achievement gaps in the nation between students from low- and high-income families. In reading, less than one in five (18%) of Connecticut's low-income fourth grade students met the proficiency standard, compared with 53% of children from higher-income families.¹¹
- An estimated 18,000 low-income children in Connecticut are in need of a quality preschool program.¹²
- The lack of quality early education can have a significant impact on children's readiness for school and their potential for lifelong educational and work success. In a survey of kindergarten teachers in low-income school districts in Connecticut:¹³
 - 75% of children who did not attend preschool arrived at kindergarten lacking basic language and literacy skills such as being able to use complete sentences, to respond when spoken to, to identify their name in print, or to recognize the first ten letters of the alphabet;

- 70% of children who did not attend preschool were unable to perform basic math tasks such as recognizing numbers, counting to ten or drawing basic shapes; and
- 65% of the teachers identified specific health problems such as asthma, skin rashes, ringworm and lack of physical exams. Nearly one-fifth of the teachers observed children who come to school hungry, tired and unkempt.

Poverty costs Connecticut

Lost future productivity from poverty: a billion-dollar loss for Connecticut.

- Each year that a child spends in poverty results in a cost of \$11,800 in lost future productivity over his or her working life. The United States labor force will lose an estimated \$137 billion in future economic output for every year that more than 12 million poor children grow up to be less productive and effective workers.¹⁴
- Since 88,600 (10.8%) of Connecticut's children live in poverty, the Connecticut labor force is projected to lose over \$1 billion in future productive capacity for every year that this number of Connecticut children live in poverty.¹⁵

Widespread illiteracy hurts business community

- The inability of young people to read as they move into adulthood has a negative fiscal impact on businesses. Approximately 300,000 Greater Hartford area adults, or roughly 41% of the adult population, are functioning below the literacy level required to earn a living wage.¹⁶ Over \$60 billion nationally is lost in productivity each year by American businesses due to employees' lack of basic skills.¹⁷

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¹ Connecticut Child Poverty Council. (2005, Jan.) *Initial plan*. Hartford, CT: Connecticut Office of Policy and Management.

² DeNavas-Walt, C., Proctor, B.D., & Lee, C.H. (2005, Aug.). *Income, poverty, and health insurance coverage in the United States*, 22. U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Reports, P60-229. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office; U.S. Census Bureau. (2005, Aug. 30). Current Population Survey, 2003, 2004, and 2005 Annual Social and Economic Supplements. Online at <http://www.census.gov/hhes/www/income/income04/statemhi.html> and <http://www.census.gov/hhes/www/income/income04/stategrid04.xls>.

³ Connecticut Voices for Children. (2005, Aug. 30). *Census Bureau reports more than one in ten Connecticut children in poverty; over one in ten residents uninsured*. News release. Author: New Haven, CT.

⁴ Connecticut Voices for Children. (2005, Aug. 30). *Census Bureau reports more than one in ten Connecticut children in poverty; over one in ten residents uninsured*. News release. Author: New Haven, CT.

⁵ Canny, P., Hall, D., & Geballe, S. (2002, Aug.). *Child and family poverty in Connecticut: 1990 and 2000*, 5. Data CONNECTIONS. New Haven: Connecticut Voices for Children.

⁶ Children's Defense Fund. (2002, June). *Ranking of largest U.S. cities*. Washington, D.C.: Author.

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- ⁷ Hall, D.J., & Geballe, S. (2005, Sept.) *The state of working Connecticut, 2005*, VI-1. New Haven: Connecticut Voices for Children.
- ⁸ Hall, D.J., & Geballe, S. (2005, Sept.) *The state of working Connecticut, 2005*, VII-1. New Haven: Connecticut Voices for Children.
- ⁹ Canny, P., & Hall, D. (2003, Jul.) *Connecticut's children: race and ethnicity matter*, 1. Census ConneCTions. New Haven: Connecticut Voices for Children.
- ¹⁰ Connecticut Commission on Children staff calculations based on data in Canny, P., & Hall, D. (2003, Jul.) *Connecticut's children: race and ethnicity matter*, 2. Census ConneCTions. New Haven: Connecticut Voices for Children.
- ¹¹ U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. (2003, Nov.). *The nation's report card: 2003* (nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/). Washington, DC: Author.
- ¹² Commissioner Betty Sternberg. Connecticut Department of Education.
- ¹³ Connecticut Commission on Children. (2004, Apr.). *Opening the kindergarten door*. Executive summary. Hartford: Author.
- ¹⁴ Children's Defense Fund Action Council. (2004). *A nation and century defining time: where is America going?*, 36. Washington, DC: Author.
- ¹⁵ Connecticut Commission on Children calculation based on CDF projection and U.S. Bureau of the Census data. 2003 figures for Connecticut population and percentage of children in poverty.
- ¹⁶ Greater Hartford Literacy Council. (2003). *Take action for literacy: the status of literacy in Greater Hartford*, 5. Hartford, CT: Author.
- ¹⁷ National Institute for Literacy. Cited in Greater Hartford Literacy Council, 6.