

# Research finds 1 in 8 children in Hawai'i live in poverty

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According to the 2015 KIDS COUNT Data Book from the Annie E. Casey Foundation, over 40,000 children, or roughly one in eight kids, in Hawai'i live in poverty. This trend has become worse both nationally and locally since 2008 when the country was in the midst of the recession.

The 2015 Data Book, which focuses on key trends in child well-being in the post-recession years, presents data on 16 measures in four domains: Economic Well-being, Education, Health, and Family and Community. The report finds that [economic recovery](#), marked by both increased employment and more concentrated wealth, has bypassed many of our [children](#) and their families who are still struggling to provide for basic living expenses.

"Despite small improvements in recent years, the data reported in this year's Data Book show that, overall, the economic conditions of our children are worse now than they were in 2008, indicating that many families did not recover once the economy started improving," said Ivette Rodriguez Stern, the Hawai'i KIDS COUNT project director with the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa Center on the Family. "We have more children in poverty now, more children living in high-poverty neighborhoods, and we still have over a quarter of our children living in families where parents lack secure employment."

Three of the four [economic conditions](#) – children living in poverty, children whose parents lack secure employment, and teens not in schools and not working – worsened over the period examined (2008 to 2013).

The share of children living in households with a high housing burden (i.e., where more than 30% of the household income is spent on housing) has improved, decreasing from 47 percent in 2008 to 43 percent in 2013. However, Hawai'i has among the worst high housing burden rates in the nation, ranking 46th out of 50 states on this indicator.

"The high cost of living in Hawai'i amplifies the hardship that many of our low-income and poor families face as they provide for their children's day-to-day needs," said Dr. Marianne Berry, director of the Center on the Family. "Research shows that growing up in poor and low-income households can have long-lasting effects, impacting a child's learning, health, and earning potential as an adult. The good news is that when we invest in the right strategies and policies, we can make a difference for kids."

"Studies show that boosting low family income by just a few thousand dollars can really make a difference in changing outcomes for children, especially when this happens early in childhood," said Stern. "The federal Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) is an example of successful tax policy that makes a difference for low-income families, and a state EITC would further bolster working families' incomes and help to improve outcomes for these children. Equally critical is providing families access to high quality and reliable child care and education. The research is clear that quality early care and education programs targeting poor and low-income families minimize the educational achievement gaps caused by poverty."

The Data Book ranks each state on overall child well-being. Hawai'i sits in the middle range for national child well-being, ranking 24th out of 50 states. Findings in the other domains include the following:

- There have been some gains in the education domain with steady improvements in reading and math proficiency rates and in the

on-time high school graduation rate during the period examined. However, there has been a small but statistically significant increase in the percentage of children not attending preschool, and Hawai'i continues to rank near the bottom third in the education domain.

- The health conditions measured – percent of low-birthweight babies, children without health insurance, the child and teen death rate, and percent of teens who abuse substances – have remained somewhat stable, showing little to no change over the period examined. Hawai'i has among the smallest share of children without health insurance, ranking 2nd in the nation on this indicator.
- Hawai'i is doing well in the area of family and community well-being, ranking 11th out of 50 states. Two indicators – children in families where the household head lacks a high school diploma and the teen birth rate – showed improvement during the period examined. However, despite the state's rank in this domain, there has been a small but statistically significant increase in the share of children living in high-poverty neighborhoods (i.e., where 30% or more of the residents are poor) going from four percent to six percent during the period examined.

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.

**More information:** The 2015 KIDS COUNT Data Book:  
[www.aecf.org/resources/the-2015-kids-count-data-book/](http://www.aecf.org/resources/the-2015-kids-count-data-book/)

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