

TRENDING: HOW WE'RE REBOUNDED FROM THE RECESSION

1 in 7 children in state living in poverty

By Maggie Gordon

Census data released earlier this month shows that more than one in three Bridgeport children were living in poverty in 2012.

The Park City had the highest share of kids below the federal poverty line in southwestern Connecticut, with a total rate of 37.6 percent. That's more than triple the rate of Fairfield County as a whole, according to the census data, which included information about municipalities with at least 65,000 residents.

Hartford had the highest child poverty ranking in the state, at 53 percent, while Stamford had the lowest, at 9.7 percent. Statewide, the average broke down to 14.8 percent, or about one in seven children.

"Having one in seven kids in poverty in our state is simply unacceptable," said Matthew Santacroce, a policy analyst at Connecticut Voices for Children.

And it's an issue that affects more than just those one in seven children — or the 10.7 percent of all Connecticut residents — living in poverty.

"There's no way we can build a sustainable and self-sustaining state and regional economy when we've got 38 percent of kids in Bridgeport under the federal poverty line," Santacroce said. "There are inevitable conse-

quences for the neighboring towns like Fairfield and Easton that are doing much better, because these kids represent the future of our state's economy and workforce. These are the kids who will take Connecticut into the 21st century."

The poverty rate for children in Bridgeport was lower in 2012 than the 39.9 percent it clocked in at the previous year, but it's still significantly higher than several years ago. Back in 2008, the census report listed the rate at 27.9 percent.

In addition to a high rate of child poverty in the Park City, Bridgeport is also battling a higher rate of children without health insurance than other neighboring cities. According to the census data, 8.5 percent of Bridgeport children have no health insurance, compared with 2.4 percent in Danbury and 7.6 percent in Stamford.

It's more than just an urban problem, said Robin Lamott Sparks, senior director of policy and research at Bridgeport Child Advocacy Coalition.

"I think when you talk about a child in general, everybody would agree that every child deserves the same opportunities out there to grow up healthy, grow up with a great education and grow up safely," Sparks said.

See Recovery on A4

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Percentage of children below poverty line

A report issued by the U.S. Census Bureau last week details the percentage of children living below the federal poverty line in communities across the nation with more than 65,000 residents.

AREA	2012 PERCENT	2008 PERCENT	PERCENT POINT CHANGE
Bridgeport	37.6	27.9	+9.7
Danbury	11.0	15.2	-4.2
Stamford	9.7	13.6	-3.9
Norwalk	13.0	16.8	-3.8
Fairfield County	11.0	10.2	+0.8
Connecticut	14.8	12.6	+2.2
United States	22.6	18.3	+4.3

SOURCE: U.S. CENSUS

► **Inside:** See how median income has begun to bounce back in your town. **A4**

► **Online:** For more about this topic, head to <http://blog.ctnews.com/trending/>

Recovery uneven across the region

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"And I think sometimes we might forget that that isn't a given here in Connecticut, especially in Bridgeport, where more than one-third of children are living below the poverty line, and we have the largest population of uninsured children in the state. That's not an even playing field for our children," she continued.

The playing field becomes even more uneven when factors like race are added

in. While 27.6 percent of Hispanics and 24 percent of black residents fell below the poverty line in Connecticut, only 5.8 percent of white resident did.

And some areas are seeing more post-recession rebounding than others. While last week's data shows Danbury's unemployment rate dropped from 7.9 percent to 4.7 percent between 2011 and 2012, Bridgeport remained largely unchanged, sliding from 13.6 percent to 13.4 percent,

which is still 4 percentage points higher than it was in 2008.

Then there's income. In 2012, Bridgeport's median household income totaled \$37,571, compared with \$61,708 in Danbury and \$75,771 in Stamford.

"That disparity shows that we're not recovering the way the rest of the county is recovering," said Lamott Sparks of BCAC.

While Bridgeport's income amounts to 86.1 percent of what it had been in

2008, Danbury and Stamford were both just shy of 91 percent of 2008's medians. Across America, the median income of \$51,371 in 2012 represented 92.9 percent of the 2008 national rate. Bridgeport's failure to catch up leaves Lamott Sparks wondering if the Park City has been left out of the American recovery story.

"I think Bridgeport as a whole, you would not see the number of children under the poverty level as we do if

Median Income and percent recovery

After a few years of loss, an analysis of U.S. Census data shows median incomes in 2012 are nearing their 2008 levels.

AREA	2012 MEDIAN	2008 MEDIAN	PERCENT RECOVERY
Bridgeport	\$37,571	\$43,657	86.1%
Danbury	\$61,708	\$67,998	90.7%
Stamford	\$75,771	\$83,603	90.6%
Norwalk	\$70,580	\$84,131	83.9%
Fairfield County	\$79,841	\$89,212	89.5%
Connecticut	\$67,276	\$73,075	92.1%
United States	\$51,371	\$55,282	92.9%

SOURCE: U.S. CENSUS

the economic recovery had reached here," she said.

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