

A Thousand Voices Speak

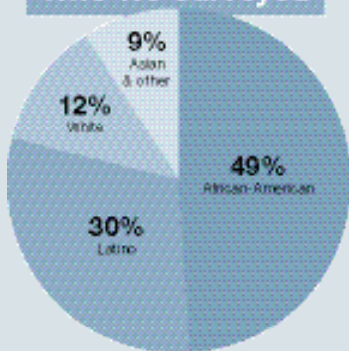


BCAC reports on how Bridgeport families are faring in the economic recession

This is the second in a series of reports on the impact of the economic recession on Bridgeport children and families.

During March and April 2009, we surveyed 1,012 Bridgeport parents at sites all over Bridgeport from childcare, Head Start centers, and schools to health clinics, social service agencies, and churches. Our survey reached a cross-section of Bridgeport residents, particularly those who are suffering the most in the current economic downturn.

Who We Surveyed



Will We Listen?

Job Loss

Growing Poverty

Hunger

Suffering and Despair

The Recession of 2008 & 2009

Job Training

Health Insurance

Housing Assistance

Safety Net Support

Bridgeport residents are continuing to lose their jobs in increasing numbers. As a result, families are unable to keep up with their housing, utility, and credit card payments. Financial disaster looms for many of Bridgeport's families. They are cutting back on food and relying on food pantries and soup kitchens to feed their families.



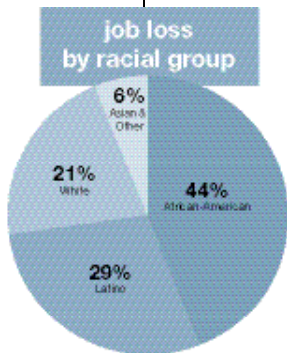
Job loss escalates while families grow more desperate

More and more Bridgeport residents are losing their jobs. They search constantly — filling out employment applications, surfing the net, visiting employers — but they find nothing. Their children see their desperation and feel the stress.

- 30% of survey respondents had lost their job, up from 26% in our January-February survey

A profile of those who lost their job in the last year

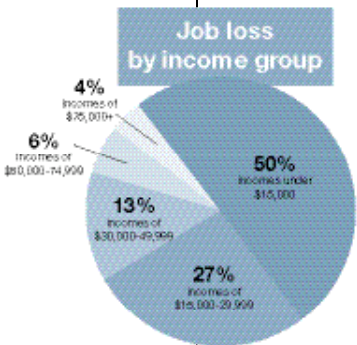
- 2 out of 3 lost their job in the last five months
- African-Americans are more likely to have lost their jobs within the last year than any other racial or ethnic group
- 50% have incomes under \$15,000 a year, and another 27% have incomes between \$15,000-29,999 a year
- 56% of those who lost their jobs have children
- 62% are not receiving any safety net assistance



As job losses mount, unpaid bills are piling up

Bridgeport residents who lost their jobs in the last year are struggling to make ends meet. They pay some bills one month and others the next. Overdue payment notices fill their mailboxes. They worry about how they will manage.

- 42% of those who lost their job in the last year are behind in utility payments
- 30% cannot pay their phone bills
- 27% are behind in rent or mortgage payments
- 26% cannot make their credit card payments
- 20% cannot stay current with medical or dental payments
- 14% cannot pay their car repair bills
- 7% are behind in their childcare payments



Hunger is increasing

As job loss escalates, increasing numbers of Bridgeport parents can no longer afford to feed their families. Seeing their children go hungry, tears parents apart. It shakes the very foundation and their belief in what it means to be a parent and provide for their family.

- 52% of those who lost their job in the last year cut back on meals because of cost
- 23% used a soup kitchen or food pantry



Bridgeport's affordable housing crisis drives lower-income families close to financial collapse

For more than ten years, the City of Bridgeport has had an affordable housing crisis. For lower-income families, rents consume such a huge proportion of their income that they are forced to cut back drastically on other basic needs such as food.

- 26% of families earning less than \$15,000 a year pay 50% or more of their income for housing, leaving little left to stretch to cover all other expenses

Families, who never thought they would have to, are turning to the state for help

As all other options run out, families are turning to the state's safety net in increasing numbers. They are swallowing their pride to ask for state assistance because they are desperate to feed their families, keep a roof over their heads, and keep their children healthy.

- 38% of survey respondents who lost their job in the past year are on safety net services

Despite low incomes, nearly half of all families who lost their job in the last year are not getting help from state safety net programs

- Of those earning less than \$30,000 who lost their job in the last year, 48% do not receive assistance through any state safety net programs

Some state safety net programs are more easily accessible than others

- 22% of those who lost their job in the last year receive Medicaid/HUSKY
- 20% receive food stamp assistance
- 8% receive housing assistance
- 8% receive heating assistance
- 5% receive monthly cash welfare assistance
- 3% receive childcare assistance



John's mother worked for 23 years. She lost her job in late spring 2008 and can only find part-time work. She sits at her kitchen table many nights trying to juggle which late bills to pay next. John often sees his mother in tears. He is worried about her health.

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What will Connecticut leaders choose?

**Will Connecticut continue to increase the divide between the rich and poor?
Or, will Connecticut follow the lead of President Barak Obama
and provide critical support to our children and families most in need.**

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Near and Far Aid Association, and The Tow Foundation who provided
support for BCAC to conduct the survey and report our findings.
We also gratefully acknowledge the support of Marta Calderon and Alejandra Holway
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