

Data CONNECTIONS

A Connecticut Voices for Children
Issue Brief

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Child and Family Poverty in Connecticut: 1990 and 2000 Fact Sheet

Child and Family Poverty in Connecticut: 1990 and 2000 reveals that Connecticut made very little progress in reducing child poverty over the 1990s, despite one of the state's strongest economies in history. Based on town-by-town analysis of Census data on child and family poverty from the 2000 and 1990 Censuses, the report finds that while some Connecticut towns and cities – most notably its largest urban areas – showed improvements in child poverty over the course of the decade, others lost ground, leaving the state as a whole little better off than it was before the incredible economic prosperity of the 1990s.

This report highlights some of the changes in child and family poverty in Connecticut over the last decade, focusing both on the distribution of child and family poverty among Connecticut's 169 cities and towns, and also on changes in this distribution over the last decade. The report places these findings in the context of other recently-released national reports on child poverty and low income families in Connecticut, and concludes by highlighting the Connecticut self-sufficiency standard as a more appropriate tool to assess family economic well-being than the outmoded federal poverty threshold used by the Census Bureau in these child poverty data.

Key findings include:

- Though the state with the highest per capita income, at least **86,000 Connecticut children** were living in poverty, according to the 2000 Census (family income of \$16,805/year for a family of four).
- The **Census 2000** child poverty rate of **10.4%** is only slightly lower than the **1990** rate of **10.7%**. By contrast, over the 1990s, the national child poverty rate fell 1.7 percentage points (from 18.3% to 16.6%) -- **five times more** than Connecticut's modest 0.3 percentage point decline.
- Analysis of child and family poverty trends in each of Connecticut's 169 towns show that **half of Connecticut's towns enjoyed reductions** in child poverty; and about **half saw increases** in child poverty.
- Most of Connecticut's largest cities enjoyed *improvements* in child poverty (**including Hartford, New Haven, Bridgeport and Stamford**), while the inner-ring suburbs of large cities saw the greatest increases in child poverty.
- Census 2000 child poverty rates reflect Connecticut's continued great disparities. While **38 CT towns have child poverty rates less than 2%**, **Hartford's 41.3% child poverty rate is**

second highest in the nation among cities with populations exceeding 100,000! New Haven, Bridgeport, and Waterbury also rank in the top 100 for high child poverty.

**Child Poverty Ranking of CT Cities Among US Cities
(with population over 100,000)**

City	Percent of All Persons Under 18 Who Are Poor	Child Poverty Rank
Hartford	41.3	2
New Haven	32.6	29
Bridgeport	25.1	72
Waterbury	23.9	84
Stamford	8.9	216

Source: Children's Defense Fund, "Ranking of Largest US Cities." The report ranks the 247 cities in the US with populations over 100,000. The city with the highest child poverty rate is ranked #1.

- Children live in poverty because their families are poor. To target interventions wisely, we need to assess family poverty, as well as child poverty. Statewide, Census 2000 reports that **8.6% of families were poor, ranging from a high of 35% in Hartford, to a low of 0% in nine CT towns** (Bethlehem, Chester, Colebrook, Harwinton, Kent, Killingworth, Lyme, Marlborough, New Hartford). Notably, **there was no change in family poverty over the course of the decade.**
- The child poverty rate in **households headed by female householders** *declined* over the decade: **from 34% in the 1990 Census to 26.6% in the 2000 Census.** The improvement was even greater among **female-headed families with children under age 5** – from 51.5% living in poverty in the 1990 Census to 37.2% in the 2000 Census. Importantly, however, while the **proportion** of female-headed households raising children in poverty declined significantly over the 1990s, the **total number** of such households declined far more modestly – from 27,396 poor households in 1990 to 26,802 in 2000.

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¹ The Children's Defense Fund reported these findings in June, 2002. The Brookings Institution recently reported on child poverty rates in the inner cities of metropolitan areas over 500,000. Because the only city over 100,000 that has higher child poverty rates than Hartford, (Brownsville, Texas), has a population smaller than 500,000, Hartford has the highest child poverty rate among cities examined in this study. Alan Berube and William H. Frey, *A Decade of Mixed Blessings: Urban and Suburban Poverty in Census 2000*. (Washington: Brookings Center on Urban and Metropolitan Policy, 2002).