September 16, 2016

Connecticut residents see income and health insurance gains, but child poverty remains high

Economic recovery brings improvement, but gaps by race and place persist

NEW HAVEN – New data from the U.S. Census Bureau’s American Community Survey data finds modest progress in health care access, median household incomes and income inequality, but little improvement in reduced poverty. Collectively, these data tell a story in Connecticut not as meaningful as the broad-based national median income increases and poverty reduction figures, not seen in a half-century.

Median household income increased in Connecticut by $1,211 in 2015, from $70,048 to $71,346. This increase, however, lagged behind the historically strong 5.2% national uptick. Demographically, only whites experienced meaningful median household income growth, leaving persistent minority gaps – in 2015, white households earned $36,906 more than blacks and $38,953 more than Latinos.

As was the case particularly for states across the nation that expanded Medicaid, the rate of Connecticut’s uninsured fell, from 7% to 6% in 2015. The drop was small compared to other states, in part because Connecticut already boasted one of the lowest uninsured rates in the nation.

Connecticut was the only state in the nation to see a statistically significant decline in income inequality, measured by the Gini Index. The decrease follows five straight years of increases. Connecticut remains the second most unequal state in the nation behind New York.

Statewide, poverty didn’t budge. More than one in ten individuals remain in poverty – 2.5 percentage points above pre-recession levels. Child poverty persists at 14.5 percent, and still remains more than three percentage points above pre-recession levels. Poverty gaps between blacks and Latinos and whites closed slightly, but still remain 14.4 and 18.9 percentage points apart, respectively.

“The encouraging data on health insurance coverage in our state affirms how smart public policy can improve the lives of children and families,” said Ellen Shemitz, Executive Director of Connecticut Voices for Children. “Progress can and has been made in health care access; a parallel commitment is needed to address uneven economic gains and unacceptable rates of child poverty.”

To see a full analysis of our findings please visit http://www.ctvoices.org/publications/ACS-2015-data, and explore even more data interactively at: https://public.tableau.com/profile/connecticut.voices.for.children#!/