

More kids in Ohio living in poverty

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Jaeonna Jordan, 6, looks for the last drop of her chocolate milk during the summer-camp lunch at Gladden Community House.

By Alan Johnson *The Columbus Dispatch* • Tuesday July 21, 2015 4:42 AM

Ohio's economy might have partially recovered from the recession, but many Ohio children have not.

There are 53,000 more Ohio children living in poverty and the overall rate is higher than during the recession in 2008, according to 2015 Kids Count data released today by the Annie E. Casey Foundation.

The state's child-poverty rate rose to 23 percent last year from 18 percent in 2008, the report showed. Ohio is 31st worst in the nation in child-poverty rate and 23rd overall, about the same as last year.

The annual report by the nonprofit foundation considers a wide variety of economic, health and educational factors in assessing the well-being of children nationally and in all 50 states individually.

“Although we are several years past the end of the recession, millions of families across the country still have not benefited from the economic recovery,” Patrick McCarthy, president and chief executive officer of the Casey Foundation, said in a statement. “While we’ve seen an increase in employment in recent years, many of these jobs are low-wage and cannot support even basic family expenses.

“Far too many families are still struggling to provide for the day-to-day needs of their children.”

Minority children have been largely “sidestepped” by Ohio’s economic bounce-back, the report said.

Black children are three times as likely to live in poverty areas in Ohio, and twice as likely to be in a single-parent family, while Latino children are most likely to be in a household where the parent isn’t a high-school graduate.

“The data show that wide gaps remain between the living standards of many children of color and other children,” said Dawn Wallace-Pascoe, the Kids Count project manager at Children’s Defense Fund-Ohio.

“The time is now for Ohio to get serious about ending child poverty, reducing economic, educational and health disparities, and improving well-being for all children.”

Summertime offers a challenge for many low-income families because without school programs, many children don’t have lunch available. That is why many schools and community centers, such as Gladden Community House, offer breakfast and lunch programs in the summer months.

There were some encouraging signs for Ohio in the Kids Count data, including a significant decline between 2008 and 2014 in the teen birthrate, to 27 per 1,000 from 39 per 1,000.

Also improving over the same time period were eighth-grade students not proficient in math (down to 60 percent from 65 percent), and high-school students not graduating on time (16 percent, down from 21 percent). Numbers for children without health insurance and teens abusing alcohol and drugs also improved.

Nationally, Minnesota’s kids had the overall best well-being, along with those in New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Iowa and Vermont. Children in Arizona, Nevada, Louisiana, New Mexico and Mississippi fared poorest.

The report is available online at aecf.org.

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