



MENU

Michigan's nonpartisan, nonprofit news source

Water you doing? Support our work.



TRENDING:

[Coronavirus Michigan](#) | [2022 Michigan governor race](#) |

[Gov. Gretchen Whitmer](#) | [Michigan K-12 schools](#) | [2022 Michigan election](#)

Children & Families

Report: COVID funds, state investments are improving lives of Michigan kids



Advocates say childhood well-being indicators are improving. Money is making a difference. (Shutterstock)

 July 28, 2022

 [Julia Forrest](#)

 [Children & Families](#)

SHARE THIS:




[Children & Families](#)

Report: COVID funds, state investments ar...



Donate



Listen To The Article 

 AD AURIS

- ***The 2022 Kids Count report shows Michigan children are better off than a few years ago.***
 - ***Fewer children are in poverty while there's more education and child care funding.***
 - ***Some warn that these increased investments via COVID-19 relief funds could run out.***
-

Michigan children are on a roll. Fewer live in poverty. There's expanded state benefits for child care costs. State funding of Michigan schools is at an all-time high. There's a big expansion of school health clinics on the way.

But there's still a long way to go, and that progress could easily be lost without continued investment.

That's the takeaway from the [2022 Kids Count report](#), released Thursday by the Michigan League for Public Policy.

SPONSOR



"We have seen continued progress," Kelsey Perdue, director of Kids Count, told Bridge Michigan Wednesday. "We need to keep our foot on the gas and make sure that these changes and this progress is made permanent, and that we will continue to build upon it."

Kids Count is an annual report that analyzes data and identifies state and county trends in economic security, education, health and safety, family and community. The data profile for Michigan shows that the state has seen improvement in 10 of 14 key areas in the last decade, including child poverty, teen births and children placed in out-of-home care because of abuse or neglect.

“We see very tangibly that what happens at the federal and state level really can go directly to supporting families and helping them make ends meet,” Perdue said. “I was pleasantly surprised to go back and see how many areas we’ve actually made progress.”

Significantly fewer children were in poverty in 2020 compared to ten years earlier, according to the report. This is due in part to the temporary expansion of the Federal Child Tax Credit and the federal Earned Income Tax Credit, which were expanded during the COVID-19 pandemic, according to the report.

The rate of child poverty declined from 23.4 percent in 2010 to 16.8 percent a decade later, with poverty rates decreasing in 82 out of the state’s 83 counties, all except Luce County, in the same time period. The FCTC expansion, implemented in 2021, boosted 114,000 Michigan children out of poverty and aided an additional 1,968,000.

Still, about 1.5 million Michiganders struggle to afford necessities, according to the report. Michigan ranks 15th in the nation for income inequality, with the top 1 percent of the income bracket making more than 21 times as much as those in the 99th percentile. About 519,000 children in Michigan live in households that spend 30 percent or more of their income on housing costs.

Perdue said that in order for the progress made by the expansion of the state and federal tax credits, the two policies must be cemented for the long-term.

“The concern is that we don’t pat ourselves on the back too early or get comfortable with the progress we’ve made and that we really (are) committed to sustaining those investments,” Perdue said.

Robert Dorigo Jones, vice president of the advocacy group Michigan’s Children, cautioned that while many families were aided financially through the pandemic because of investments like those in the FCTC and federal EITC, those expansions have expired. At the state level, Michigan has [one of the lowest earned income tax credits](#) in the country.

“We did even better than those current stats when we were working through the pandemic, but those things are expiring, and we’re gonna see a rebound back over time,” Jones said.

Among other findings in the report:

Internet access

From 2019 to 2020, more than 42,000 additional Michigan children had access to the internet at home — resulting from funds supplied by federal COVID relief dollars. However, more than 30 percent of children [in some counties](#) in the state still lack access to the internet at home.

Child care

The 2022-23 state budget includes a \$1.4 billion investment in child care that raises the eligibility income level so more families qualify for assistance.

This comes as low- and moderate-income families pay more than 7 percent above the affordability recommendation for one child to be in a licensed child care setting, making child care hard to afford in the state. Only 5 percent of the 35 percent of kids eligible for child care subsidies received them, and only 41 percent of child care providers serve children with subsidies, because the costs of providing services outweigh the subsidy reimbursement.

Help is on the way: the state is spending [\\$100 million](#) by 2024 to expand child care options, by investing in building centers, educator training and start-up grants.

School funding

High school graduation rates are up, from 76 percent in 2010 to 81 percent in 2021. But there are still serious areas of concern in Michigan schools, according to the report.

For example, Michigan has the third-highest rate of kids being chronic absenteeism in the fourth grade in 2019, rising by about 47 percent from 2015. It also highlighted that Michigan, along with four other states, has among the highest out-of-school suspension rates.

The report also highlighted a disparity in high school graduation rates, with 80 percent of high schoolers overall graduating on time, compared to 63 percent for Black students and 73 percent for English language learners.

Michigan [approved a \\$16.7 billion education budget](#) for the 2022-23 school year that increases classroom spending and equalizes funding to the state's schools.

Jones said increased funding has helped students, but the state needs to continue to invest to keep up with costs to serve students based on their needs.

“There may have been a huge increase because of the pandemic, but that is not going to happen going forward,” Jones said. “What’s happened with the state budget is a great step for this year. We need to look at solutions to make sure that that happens every year into the future.”

Perdue said that while there have been “a lot of wins,” there are still many kids in Michigan in poverty and facing tough situations. She said that while COVID-19 relief funds and other investments have helped many Michiganders, the state still needs to look at how to better keep those investments sustained long-term.

“The big takeaway is that policy matters, investment matters,” Perdue said. “And folks who aim to keep up this momentum, we have to figure out how do we continue to support strengthening our safety nets, supporting families and working folks throughout our state, and then making sure that we can sustain those investments?”

Related Articles:



Screen time is making kids nearsighted. Parents can help, U-M survey shows

July 19, 2022 | [Jared Ramsey](#) in [Children & Families](#)



New Michigan law cuts red tape for small, home-based child-care providers

June 24, 2022 | [Koby Levin, Chalkbeat](#) in [Children & Families](#)



Drag queens to Michigan politicians: Leave us out of your election-year drama

June 20, 2022 | [Roni Kane](#) in [Children & Families](#)



We're not just a news organization, we're also your neighbors

We've been there for you with daily Michigan COVID-19 news; reporting on the emergence of the virus, daily numbers with our tracker and dashboard, exploding unemployment, and we finally were able to report on mass vaccine distribution. We report because the news impacts all of us. Will you please support our nonprofit newsroom?



DONATE NOW



[Home](#)

[Popular](#)

[Topics](#)

[Special Reports](#)

[Archive](#)

[About](#)

[Subscribe](#)

[Contact](#)

©2022 Bridge Michigan. All rights reserved.



[Website by Gravity Works](#)