

United Way
of Wisconsin



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Nearly 40% of Wisconsin Households Still Struggling to Afford Basic Living Needs

Second United Way of Wisconsin ALICE® Report reveals hardship continues for many

MADISON, WI—August 28, 2018—38 percent of Wisconsin’s 2.3 million households struggle to afford basic needs like housing, childcare, food and transportation. The staggering number comes from the second United Way ALICE Report, released today by United Way of Wisconsin in conjunction with local United Ways across the state.

ALICE is an acronym for **A**sset **L**imited, **I**ncome **C**onstrained, **E**mployed. ALICE households earn more than the Federal Poverty Level (FPL), but less than the state’s basic cost of living, which the report calls the ALICE Threshold. In total, 600,626 of Wisconsin households (~26%) are ALICE, while another 271,935 (~12%) earn below the FPL.

The latest report demonstrates the consistent financial hardship Wisconsin ALICE households faced from 2010 to 2016 and reveals the obstacles contributing to their financial instability. The report also details what has changed since Wisconsin’s first United Way ALICE Report was published in 2016.*

Key Takeaways:

- **62 percent of Wisconsin jobs pay less than \$20 an hour**, making it tough to afford the annual budget needed for a single adult (\$20,000+) and a family of four (\$60,000+).
- **Wisconsin’s minimum household survival budget increased by 18 percent for a family of four and 24 percent for a single adult between 2010 and 2016**, despite just 9 percent inflation nationally.
- **Nearly one-third of Wisconsin families with children have income below the ALICE Threshold.**

**The 2016 version of the ALICE (Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed) Study of Financial Hardship characterized 29 percent of Wisconsin households as ALICE. Due to an error calculating tax code data, that number should have been 23 percent. More information can be found at <https://unitedwaywi.site-ym.com/page/ALICE>.*

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- **At least 51 percent of Wisconsin households do not have enough money saved to cover expenses for three months,** let alone enough to save for emergencies or future use.

“We all have an ALICE in our lives,” said United Way of Wisconsin Executive Director Charlene Mouille. “Despite the basic American belief that if you work hard you’ll be able to support your family, the ALICE Report shows that’s simply not the case for nearly two in five Wisconsin households.”

United Ways in Wisconsin have joined the grassroots movement of over 300 United Ways in 14 states using the same methodology for documenting financial need. The reports build on a United Way study first developed in partnership with Rutgers University.

“Through the ALICE report we’re seeing that many families continue to fight through low wages, depleted savings and increasing costs of living,” said the report’s lead researcher, United Way ALICE National Director Stephanie Hoopes, Ph.D. “United Way chapters across the country are devoted to helping people understand who ALICE is, and how we can help.”

While there’s never going to be a singular solution, United Way is focused on providing a basic foundation in health, education, and financial stability to help improve the lives of both ALICE households and those in poverty, for the long-term benefit of the wider community.

“Our primary goal is to help change the perception of ALICE,” explained Mouille. “These are not stereotypically ‘poor’ people, but rather our friends and neighbors who hold paying jobs but can’t keep up with the increasing cost of basic living in Wisconsin. It’s important for us to understand that hardship goes beyond the limits of race, age and geography.”

To read an embargoed copy of the report and find county-by-county and town-level data on the size and demographics of the Wisconsin ALICE population, as well as the community conditions and costs faced by ALICE households, visit <https://unitedwaywi.site-ym.com/page/ALICE>.

The United Way ALICE Report was funded in part by corporate sponsors including AT&T, Atlantic Health System, Deloitte, Entergy, Novartis and The UPS Foundation. The Wisconsin ALICE Report was supported by Thrivent Financial Foundation and U.S. Venture.

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Visit www.unitedwaywi.org to learn more and how you can work with United Way to make things easier for ALICE.

About United Way of Wisconsin: United Way goes beyond temporary fixes to create lasting change in communities throughout Wisconsin. United Way fights for the health, education, and financial stability of every person in every community. Connect with your local United Way to learn more about the organization's progress in advancing common good in your community. The United Way of Wisconsin (UWWi) is the statewide organization providing member support services to the local and independent United Ways in Wisconsin. Through UWWi member support services, local United Ways in Wisconsin have capacity to individually and collectively build stronger communities.

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