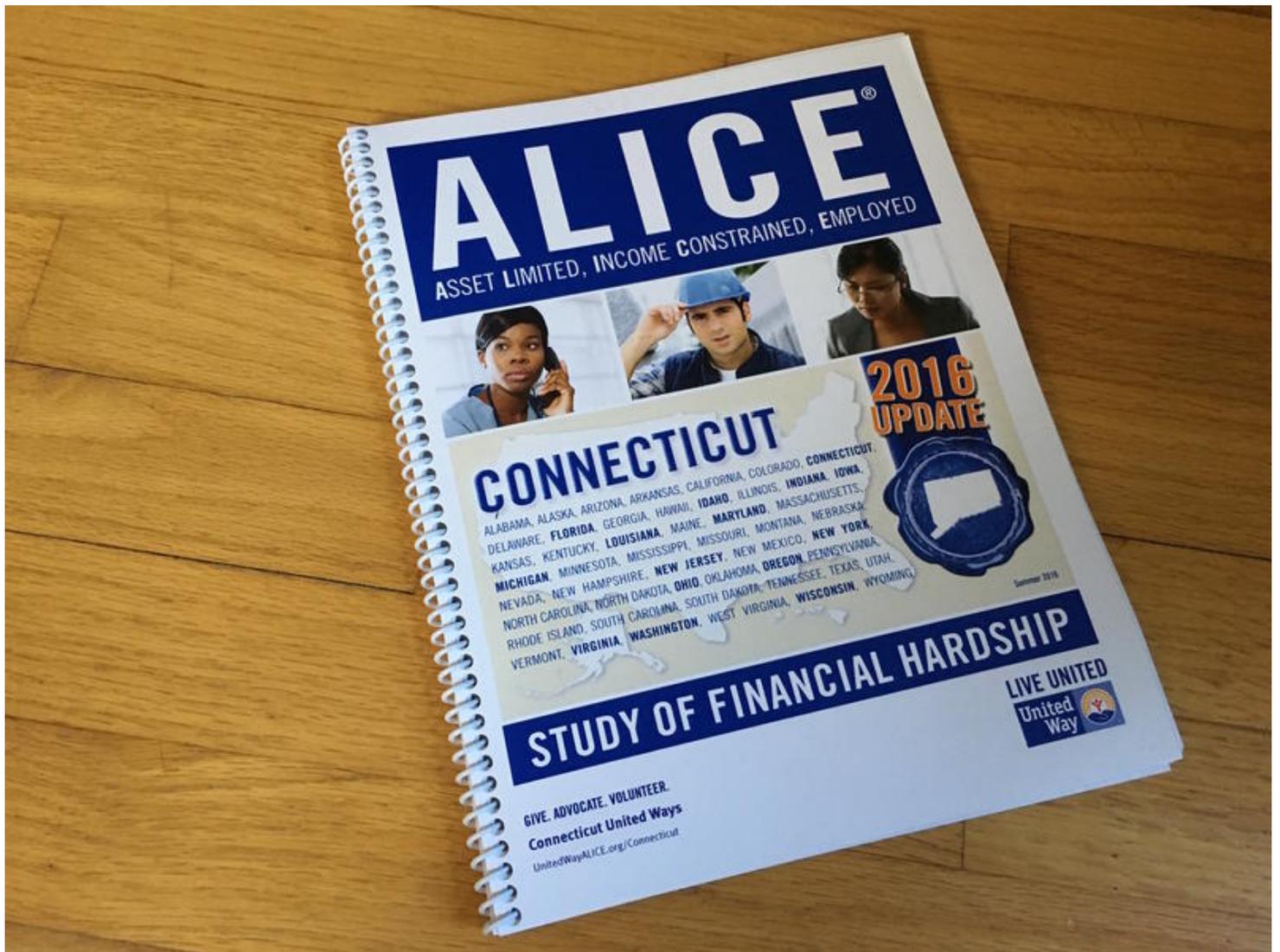


Number of Working Poor Families in Connecticut Rises

By HARRIET JONES (/PEOPLE/HARRIET-JONES) • OCT 12, 2016



HARRIET JONES / WNPR

The proportion of people in Connecticut who are working, and yet still struggling to make ends meet has risen in the last two years. That's according to a new study from United Way. (<http://alice.ctunitedway.org/files/2014/11/2016-ALICE-Report-Update.pdf>)

They're called ALICE; that's the shorthand for people who are Asset Limited, Income Constrained, and Employed. The designation comes from United Way of Connecticut, which is attempting to put a face on this group, which the charity says doesn't receive enough recognition or help from society at large.

United Way's latest ALICE report, says more than one in four households in the state can be described this way; 27 percent of the state's population, up from 25 percent in its latest study in 2014. That's more than 360,000 households, who are above the federal poverty level, but still struggling to get by.

The issue is that the cost of living, basic necessities such as housing, food childcare, healthcare and transportation, is outpacing wages for many jobs.

Report author Stephanie Hoopes says the economy overall is improving, but it's not helping everyone.

"While we're seeing some good signs in the economy, this group is still struggling," she said.

As well as providing facts and figures, the report is also an exercise in outreach, according to Rick Porth, CEO of United Way of Connecticut. "We're trying to put a face on ALICE, we're trying to help people walk in ALICE's shoes, so that they can have a better understanding," he said.

People who provide childcare, serve in restaurants, check out in grocery stores, or may be nursing assistants, teaching aides and auto mechanics can be counted as ALICE.

"A health emergency, or a reduction in hours at work, or even car repairs could send an ALICE family into a tailspin," said Porth.

Insecurity, he said, affects many more people than we realize. "The federal poverty limit is not an adequate measure of financial hardship across the country," he said.

The trend may be accelerating, according to the study, because technology is making some jobs obsolete, and the so-called gig economy, or on-demand employment is creating more uncertainty for families. The study pegs survival costs for a family of four in Connecticut at \$70,788 a year.