

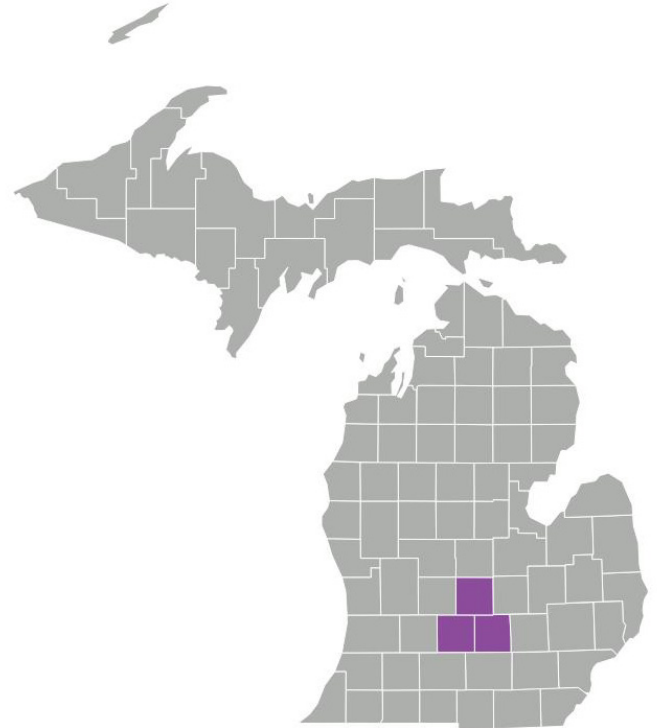
Michigan Poverty & Well Being Map: South Central Region

The South Central region includes: Clinton, Eaton, and Ingham counties. Learn more about the map at poverty.umich.edu.

Investing in Education in Lansing Can Boost Economic Well Being in South Central Michigan

The South Central region of Michigan looks comparable to the state overall with similar rates of poverty, 12.7% vs. 13%, and similar median incomes, \$63,685 for the region vs. \$63,202 for the state. Poverty rates in Clinton and Eaton counties are well below the statewide average of 13% (7.8% and 8.8%, respectively). However, 16.6% of residents in Ingham County are poor. This disparity stems from much higher rates of poverty in Lansing, where close to 22% of the population have incomes below the poverty line.¹

Focusing on family poverty, a disproportionate number of poor families in both the county and region live in Lansing. Seventy percent of poor families in Ingham County live in Lansing, and these families make up 50% of all poor families in the region. Additionally, close to 70% of poor families in Lansing have incomes below 50% of the poverty line, which is considered deep poverty.² The economic disparity between Lansing and the rest of Ingham County and surrounding region remains large when we evaluate the ability for working households to afford the cost of living. In addition to the households in poverty, another 30% of households in Lansing are Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed (ALICE) and struggle to meet the basic costs of living. Overall, 23% of households in both Ingham County and the region fall between the poverty line and the ALICE threshold, which is below the state average of 26%. Along with these disproportionate rates of poverty and ALICE, Lansing has a median family income of \$57,853, compared to a median family income of \$82,368 in Ingham County.³ The unemployment rate in Lansing is consistently two percentage points higher than the surrounding counties in the



	State	Region
Population	10,062,512	473,527
Median Income	\$63,202	\$63,685
Below Poverty Level (<18)	17.6%	14.1%
Below Poverty Level	13.0%	12.7%
ALICE	25.9%	23.4%
ALICE + Poverty Rate	39.0%	36.1%
Receiving Food Stamps/SNAP	12.6%	10.4%
Housing Cost Burdened	31.3%	30.3%
Without Health Insurance	7.1%	6.5%
Single Parent Households	25.2%	23.1%

region, so ensuring access to jobs is part of the solution to addressing these disparities.⁴ However, improving access to jobs may require investments in education and training. Currently, the percentage of people without a high school diploma is twice as high in Lansing compared the rest of the region, which limits job opportunities. And while ensuring students complete high school will have an impact on access to jobs, improving access to additional training beyond high school will be key to ensuring increased employment equals increased earnings. A major hurdle to further training and part of what may be driving low levels of high school completion is low levels of student proficiency among students in the Lansing Public Schools. Across the state and in Ingham County, about 28% of 11th grade students meet college readiness benchmarks, compared to 5.5% in Lansing.⁵

Ensuring that students both remain in school and are receiving instruction to prepare them for education and training after college will be key to improving employment for residents, but educational interventions cannot wait until high school. As early as third grade, students in Lansing are behind their peers, with only 16.6% of students scoring proficient or advanced in reading and 14% in math, while about 40% of third-grade students in Ingham County and statewide score proficient in these areas.⁶

One way to improve student proficiency in elementary school is to invest in early childhood education to ensure that children are ready to learn when they enter kindergarten. Lansing Public Schools offers a free universal preschool program for four year olds through the Great Start Readiness Program (GSRP), however about 28% of Lansing kindergartners did not attend any preschool prior to starting school in the 2022-2023 school year.⁷ One potential reason families may not participate is that the program only operates four days a week, which could be a barrier to families that have greater child care needs than this.⁸ Within this same vein, a recent statewide evaluation of the GSRP program found that 30% of participating families reported that expanding the program to five days or increasing the number of hours per day would free them to add more hours to their work week.⁹ Expanding the universal preschool program in Lansing so that it provides instruction and care for more days or more hours a week could be a win-win for families. It would provide more instruction time for children who are already enrolled, make the program more attractive to households that have child care needs beyond the hours that GSRP is in session, and would allow more options for employment, thus helping to boost earnings. Changes that couple GSRP with care that can be paid for with child care vouchers would create a wrap-around solution that could help meet the combined preschool and child care needs for low-income working families.

References

- 1 An even greater percentage of individuals in East Lansing are below the poverty line, 35.5%. However, the high rates of individual poverty in East Lansing do not translate into high rates of family poverty, suggesting that this is driven by the large student population.
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- 3 Social Explorer. "American Community Survey (ACS) 2017-2021 (5-Year Estimates) <https://www.socialexplorer.com/reports/socialexplorer/en/report/837fe08c-9f6e-11ee-a22c-5fb865ea7d0c>
- 4 Michigan Department of Technology, Management, & Budget & Bureau of Labor Statistics, United States Department of Labor. "Local Area Employment Statistics." <https://milmi.org/DataSearch/LAUS>
- 5 MI School Data. "College Readiness (Includes SAT Data), 2021-2022". State of Michigan. <https://www.mischooldata.org/college-readiness/>
- 6 MI School Data. "Grades 3-8 State Testing (Includes PSAT Data) Proficiency, 2021-22". <https://www.mischooldata.org/grades-3-8-state-testing-includes-psat-data-performance/>
- 7 MI School Data. "Early Childhood Program Participation by Kindergarten Class, 2022-2023." State of Michigan. <https://www.mischooldata.org/early-childhood-program-participation-by-kindergarten-class/>
- 8 Sullivan, Emily. "[The Unintended Consequences of Universal Preschool](#)." *EdSurge*, May 10, 2021.
- 9 Michigan State University Community Evaluation Programs. "Great Start Readiness Program State Evaluation Annual Report 2021-2022." [May 2023]. <https://cep.msu.edu/upload/gsrp/GSRP%20Annual%20Report%202021-22.pdf>