WORKING HARD AND STRUGGLING TO MAKE ENDS MEET

Where you are born across the Chicago region shapes your access to opportunities.

Your zip code can predict the quality of your education, how much money you'll earn over the course of your lifetime, and even your life expectancy, which can vary by more than 20 years depending on the neighborhood.

- 1 in 3 households across the Chicago region **struggle to afford the basic costs of living.**
- More Cook County residents are **one emergency away from financial crisis** and cannot afford basic necessities such as housing, childcare, food, transportation, and health care.
- They often **earn too much to qualify for most public assistance** but not enough to weather an emergency or plan for the future.

HOW DOES UNITED WAY HELP?

United Way's **ALICE (Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed)** research provides statewide insight into the financial struggles facing many households who are living paycheck to paycheck. We support our community partners throughout the Chicago region to ensure households are able to meet their immediate basic needs—a roof over their heads, access to food, a path to a new career, and other vital services.

LEARN MORE View the 2025 ALICE Report for Illinois at UnitedForAlice.org/state-overview/Illinois

THESE WORKING FAMILIES ARE THE BACKBONE OF OUR COMMUNITY

They're our friends and neighbors and represent many essential workers.

- Daycare Worker
- Janitor/ Custodian
- Grocery Store Worker
- Restaurant Server
- Customer Service Representative
- Home Healthcare Worker

Updated October 2, 2025

DATA PAINTS THE PICTURE

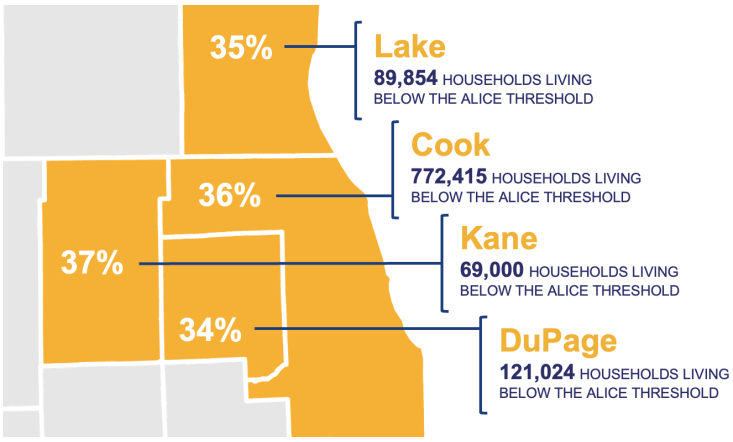
From 2019 to 2023, the number of households in Cook County struggling to make ends meet **increased by more than 85,000.**

$86,676 PER YEAR*

ALICE **Household Survival Budget** for a family of four in Cook County

HOUSEHOLDS BY INCOME

1 in 3 households across the Chicago region struggle to afford the basic costs of living.

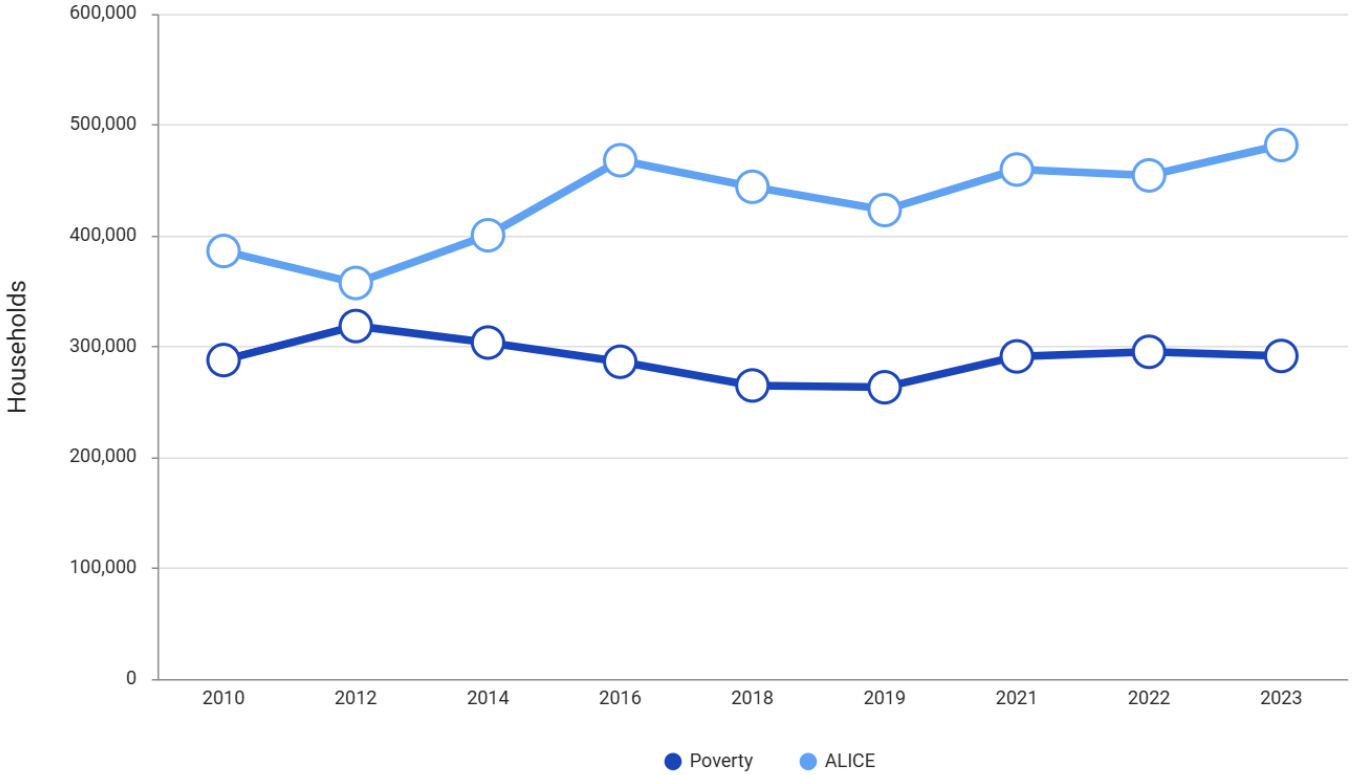


*Data based on household of two adults and two children in childcare

More Illinois households are struggling to meet their basic needs, including housing, childcare, food, transportation, and health care.

WHY?
INFLATION, RISING COSTS, AND DIMINISHED PUBLIC AID, DESPITE WAGE INCREASES.

NUMBER OF HOUSEHOLDS IN COOK COUNTY



Data pulled from "The State of ALICE in Illinois: 2025 Update on Financial Hardship." Report informed by data gathered through 2023.

Updated October 2, 2025

United Way of Metro Chicago

BUILDING A STRONGER CHICAGO REGION. **THIS IS UNITED WAY.**

LIVEUNITEDchicago.org

@UNITEDWAYCHICAGO @UNITEDWAYCHI

@UNITED WAY OF METRO CHICAGO