

# Austerity programs hurt children, say scholars

July 2 2013, by Brooke Donald

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(Medical Xpress)—Austerity programs in several countries in North America and Europe are resulting in cuts to services for poor families that will have lasting impacts on children's health and well-being, warns Paul Wise, a Stanford expert on child health.

"There are shifts in the [demography](#) of the United States, for example, that have meant reallocation of resources from the young to the old in ways never seen before," Wise said. "And at the same time, the political power of older Americans continues to be far greater than [young adults](#) and children."

Wise is a senior fellow at Stanford's Freeman Spogli Institute for International Studies (FSI). Researchers at FSI, the Center on Poverty and Inequality and the School of Medicine, where Wise is also a professor, are working across disciplines to gather analytical evidence on these issues for policymakers.

The state of children in developed democracies was the subject of a recent conference at Stanford that brought together leading scholars in medicine, [child welfare](#), politics and economics. Wise hosted the group as part of his involvement in the International Network for Research on Inequalities in Child Health, or [INRICH](#).

Wise said that spending on programs that help children is being slashed with little public discussion. He warns that such cuts will further hurt families already suffering the effects of the recession and undermine

efforts to create a vibrant and just society.

"It's a new kind of problem that we haven't faced before," Wise said.  
"Because of the fractious political debates and relatively weak voice of young families and children, there is some urgency to raise these issues."

Researchers at the conference said there is evidence that policy changes that improve programs for poor children and families have positive effects.

A dramatic reduction in poverty among the elderly in the United States is in large measure because of focused policies and programs, the researchers said. Initiatives to reduce child poverty in Scandinavian countries and the United Kingdom have also proven effective.

Provided by Stanford University

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