



MISSISSIPPI KIDS COUNT

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UNDER EMBARGO until Tuesday, July 21, 2015, 12:01 a.m. EDT

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1.7 Million More Children Live in Low-Income Working Families Today Than in Midst of Great Recession

Number of Children Living in Poverty Impacts Mississippi's 50th Ranking for Overall Child Well-Being

STARKVILLE – Nationally, about 1.7 million more children live in low-income working families today than during the Great Recession, according to the newly released 2015 *KIDS COUNT*[®] *Data Book* from [the Annie. E. Casey Foundation](#). The total number of children in low-income families across America is now 18.7 million, or around one out of every four children. Nearly a third of children are living in families where no parent has full-time employment. And even when parents are working full time, wages and benefits are often not sufficient to adequately support a family.

The 2015 *Data Book*, which focuses on key trends in child well-being in the post-recession years, measures child well-being in four domains: economic well-being, education, health, and family and community. Today, the Casey Foundation reveals that the rising tide of recovery in the form of increasing employment and concentrated wealth has left stagnant pockets of low-income, struggling communities and families, where a child's future is anchored in scarcity and hardship.

“With almost a quarter of the nation's children living in low-income households, all sectors in our nation must work to ensure that the economic recovery reaches all families, especially those who are losing ground in our recent prosperity,” said Patrick McCarthy, president and CEO of the Casey Foundation. “Even though we've seen an increase in employment in recent years, many of these jobs are low-wage and cannot support even basic family expenses. The outcome is that millions of families are still struggling to provide for the day-to-day needs of their children.”

In addition to the overall ranking of 50th, Mississippi ranks last in three of the four measured domains and 48th in education. For the first time in a decade, a non-New England state ranks number one for overall child well-being. Minnesota holds the top spot, followed by New Hampshire and Massachusetts.

As the number of children living in low-income families expands, one in five children nationally is still stranded in poverty.

- Since 2008, the number of children living in poverty has risen by almost 3 million, from 13.2 million to 16.1 million today.
- At a rate of 22 percent in 2013, the rate of child poverty is still several percentage points higher than before the recession, when it was 18 percent.
- In Mississippi, 34 percent of children lived in poverty in 2013 compared to 30 percent in 2008.

The number of children living in high-poverty neighborhoods across the country— where poverty rates are more than 30 percent -- is the highest since 1990:

- Today, almost one in seven children -- 14 percent -- live in high poverty communities
- More than two million more children live in areas of concentrated poverty today than 2006-2010.
- In Mississippi, 27 percent live in high-poverty areas compared to 23 percent between the years of 2006-2010.

“Never has it been more critical to make strategic investments in Mississippi’s children, particularly in terms of investing early in children’s education and health,” said Dr. Linda Southward, Mississippi KIDS COUNT director. “The research is clear. Children who are healthy are more likely to attend school. Children who attend school regularly are more likely to be better readers and also graduate from high school. The long-term economic impact of job attainment and stability increases when one is healthier and more educated. Changing the trajectory to reduce both childhood poverty and adult poverty is attainable, by investing early, while simultaneously engaging both families and communities.”

The recently released Mississippi KIDS COUNT policy brief [“Countdown to Kindergarten: The Impact of Social and Emotional Development on Academic Success”](#) has underscored the importance of conducting developmental screenings for young children to determine the need for immediate referrals and follow-ups. The study revealed that approximately one half (48%) of children attending the state-funded Pre-K Collaborative programs either: 1) needed immediate referral or 2) on-going monitoring. In addition to identifying potential developmental delays, the use of developmental screenings can also be an enormous return on investment. For example, North Carolina has demonstrated substantial cost savings when investing in quality early childhood programs and can serve as a model to Mississippi to vastly improve developmental screening rates. In that state, the screening rate increased dramatically to 98%. That coupled with early identification and treatment resulted in substantial reductions of children being placed in special education services.

The Casey Foundation offers a number of recommendations to make good on the American promise of opportunity for all children. The Foundation promotes a two-generation strategy that simultaneously addresses the needs of children directly while providing tools and resources to their parents. Three critical strategies include:

- Provide parents with multiple pathways to get family-supporting jobs and achieve financial stability.
- Ensure access to high-quality early childhood education and enriching elementary school experiences.
- Equip parents to better support their children socially and emotionally and to advocate for their kids' education.

More detailed recommendations can be found in the 2014 report, [Creating Opportunity for Families: A Two-Generation Approach.](#)

The 2015 Data Book will be available July 21 at 12:01 a.m. EDT at www.aecf.org. Additional information is available at <http://databook.kidscount.org>, which also contains the most recent national, state and local data on hundreds of indicators of child well-being. The Data Center allows users to create rankings, maps and graphs for use in publications and on websites, and to view real-time information on mobile devices.

The Annie E. Casey Foundation creates a brighter future for the nation's children by developing solutions to strengthen families, build paths to economic opportunity and transform struggling communities into safer and healthier places to live, work and grow. For more information, visit www.aecf.org. KIDS COUNT[®] is a registered trademark of the Annie E. Casey Foundation. For more information about Mississippi KIDS COUNT, visit www.kidscount.ssrc.msstate.edu