



Carsey Institute: Urban, Rural Children Experience Similar Rates Of Low Income And Poverty

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DURHAM, N.H. - The rates of children living in low-income families are similar in both rural areas and central cities, a new report from the Carsey Institute at the University of New Hampshire finds. Nearly one-half of all children living in rural areas and in central cities lived in a low-income family.

"During the past 15 years, as poverty has eased in central cities, rates of low-income children in urban and rural areas has been converging," says report author Allison Churilla, a research associate at the Carsey Institute and a Ph.D. candidate in sociology at UNH. "This implies that rural areas have been less responsive to changes that have benefited low-income families in central cities, reaffirming the unique policy needs of children in these two distinct areas."

"We look at children specifically because they are the most vulnerable population and they live at higher rates of poverty and low-income than the general population," adds Sally Ward, senior fellow at the Carsey Institute and a professor of sociology at UNH. "These numbers are also an indication of where these children might be in 20 years, as there are strong ties between childhood poverty and economic challenges in adulthood."

Analyzing data from the 2007 Annual Social and Economic Surveys of the Current Population Survey, the report finds that although numbers of low-income children are higher in urban areas - more than nine million - than rural areas (five million), their rates are similar. "Low income" is defined as a family earning below \$40,000 for a family of four, twice the federal poverty level.

The Carsey brief also found that 80 percent of low-income children in both rural and urban areas had at least one working parent, indicating that parental employment does not guarantee economic security for children. "One explanation for the persistence of low income is that many low-income, full-time working parents are employed in low-wage service occupations or in occupations sensitive to seasonal cycles," says Churilla.

Although the racial and ethnic makeup of low-income children differs considerably in central cities and rural areas, children who are racial and ethnic minorities are at greater risk of living at or near the poverty level in both areas. The largest share of low-income children in rural areas was white (61 percent), while the largest share in central cities was Hispanic (43 percent). Still, in rural areas, most minority children had rates of low income that were nearly twice those of white children, and in central cities, rates for minority children were 2.5 times higher than for white children.

To download a copy of the issue brief, go to

http://carseyinstitute.unh.edu/publications/IB_UrbanRuralChildren08.pdf

The Carsey Institute at the University of New Hampshire conducts research and analysis on the challenges facing rural families and communities in New Hampshire, New England, and the nation. The Carsey Institute sponsors independent, interdisciplinary research that documents trends and conditions affecting families and communities, providing valuable information and analysis to policymakers, practitioners, the media, and the general public. Through this work, the institute contributes to public dialogue on policies that encourage social mobility and sustain healthy, equitable communities. The Carsey Institute was established in May 2002 with a generous gift from UNH alumna and noted television producer Marcy Carsey. Visit us online at <http://carseyinstitute.unh.edu/>.

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