



Children In South And Southwest Pay Price Of Poverty

Carsey Institute Releases New Research On Rural Child Poverty

Contact: [Lori Wright](#)

603-862-4650

Communications Director

The Carsey Institute

University of New Hampshire

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EDITORS AND REPORTERS: The full report is available online at http://carseyinstitute.unh.edu/FS_ruralchildpoverty_07.htm. Carsey researchers William O'Hare and Sarah Savage are available for interviews. O'Hare can be reached at 443-472-7434 (cell) and Savage can be reached at 603-862-3603.

DURHAM, N.H. – In 37 states, a higher percentage of rural children live in poverty today than in 2000, with the South and Southwest having a higher percentage of children living in poverty than other regions of the country, according to a new study released today by the Carsey Institute.

The Carsey Institute at the University of New Hampshire analyzed new poverty data available today from the U.S. Census Bureau, and found many parts of rural America where the child poverty rate is much higher than the national rural child poverty rate of 22.2 percent.

The new U.S. Census poverty figures, which come after five years of economic recovery, show a significant decline in poverty for people over 65 but no significant decline in poverty for children or adults aged 18 to 64. From 2005 to 2006, metropolitan America saw a 2.7 percent drop in the number of people living in poverty, while the nation's nonmetropolitan areas experienced an overall 6.2 percent increase in the number of people living in poverty, according to William O'Hare, senior fellow at the Carsey Institute.

The South has a higher rate of rural child poverty -- 27.2 percent -- than any other region in the country. Mississippi has a higher rural child poverty rate than any other state (34.7 percent) and is closely followed by Louisiana (34.4 percent). New Mexico ranks third with 30.1 percent of rural children living in poverty.

Ohio had the largest percentage point increase in rural child poverty between 2000 and 2006 at +6.8 percentage points, followed by Indiana (+6.4 percentage points), and Maine (+5.5 percentage points).

"Child poverty is a persistent problem in many areas of America, particularly the rural South and Southwest. In some states, over 30 percent of children are growing up poor. We are seeing long-term neglect in some areas, and the impact of globalization in others. Small-town America is hard hit when low skill manufacturing and natural resource-based jobs disappear," said Cynthia M. Duncan, director of the Carsey Institute.

"Research has shown that good policy and programs can alleviate that poverty – programs that provide early childhood education, making work pay for parents, decent schools, and access to health care. We shouldn't be going backwards on addressing child poverty in the 21st century," Duncan said.

The child poverty rate is widely used as an indicator of child well-being since growing up in poverty often compromises the future health status and educational attainment of children. Changes in child poverty signal important changes in children's quality of life and future outcomes.

"The new figures released by the Census Bureau today indicate that children growing up in rural America continue to have higher poverty rates than their counterparts in urban America," O'Hare said. "Our new data clearly show that the post-2001 economic recovery is not reaching rural communities and rural children."

Key findings include:

- The rural child poverty rate in 2006 ranges from a low of 9.1 percent in Connecticut to a high of nearly 34.7 percent in Mississippi.
- Rural child poverty rates increased between 2000 and 2006 in 37 of the 47 states where rural data was available (data were unavailable in 3 states and the District of Columbia).
- In 19 states, the increase in the rural child poverty rate was higher than the increase in the overall U.S. child poverty rate (3.0 percent) between 2000 and 2006.
- The state with the biggest percentage point increase in rural child poverty between 2000 and 2006 was Ohio (+6.8 percentage points), followed by Indiana (+6.4 percentage points), and Maine (+5.5 percentage points).
- Ten states showed a decrease in the rural child poverty rate, led by Maryland with a 4.0 percentage point decrease.
- Five states (Ohio, Indiana, Maine, Tennessee, and South Carolina) experienced increases of 5 percentage points or more in rural child poverty rate between 2000 and 2006.
- Three states (Mississippi, Louisiana, and New Mexico) all had rural child poverty rates above 30 percent in 2006, which reflects the pervasive child poverty problem in the rural South as well as areas with high percentages of minority populations.

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 Carsey 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/>.



