

DATA

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The **MS KIDS COUNT** 2007 Data Book highlights key indicators pertaining to children's safety, well-being, health and education, though these sections are not meant to be all-inclusive. While we recognize that these domains are interrelated and critical to children's ability to flourish, in this—our first—**MS KIDS COUNT** publication, we take a closer look at the areas of children's health and safety. One of the primary goals of the **MS KIDS COUNT** 2007 Data Book is to begin community-level dialogue and examination. Another goal is to capture the "picture" of children and families' well-being within individual communities.

Features of the MS 2007 Data Book include an examination of how this "picture" changes over time, how it compares to the nation as a whole and, occasionally, to other southern states. We also determine whether the trends are statistically significant. Another unique aspect of our Data Book that we believe may be helpful is a comparison of our current standings to the National Healthy People 2010 goals.

It is with great pride that we point out legislation and programs in Mississippi that are successful. Within each section, we also highlight news stories and policy considerations with the realization that other evidence-based practices and policies may be even more promising for Mississippi's children than the ones we note. We hope that this publication, along with the 1st annual **MS KIDS COUNT** Summit, will promote discussion of successful strategies statewide.

Below, please find a summary of our primary findings for each section:

SAFETY

The Mississippi Legislature is to be applauded for enacting Mississippi's primary seat belt law (May 2006), as research has shown primary seat belt laws to save lives. Ongoing safety concerns in the state include the lack of seat belt and bicycle helmet use among adolescents, particularly males. Drinking drivers and adolescents who carry weapons also present tremendous challenges. In each of the following points regarding safety, the percentages of male adolescent reports of unsafe behavior are higher than those of females. Mississippi rates are improving on these issues, but still remain high.



The average number of people per Mississippi household is

2.6³

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- Mississippi 9th- to 12th-grade males were less likely to report wearing safety belts than their female counterparts. Although Mississippi's percentages of reports of safety belt use improved from 1993 to 2003, the percentage who reported infrequent use still remained significantly higher than the percentage for Alabama, with 23.2% of youth reporting they never or rarely wore one in 2003.
- In 2003, Mississippi 9th- to 12th-grade males were less likely to report wearing a bicycle helmet than females. The percentages of Mississippi adolescent reports of bicycle helmet use improved from 1993 to 2003, but the percentage who reported infrequent use still remained significantly higher than the United States and Alabama, with 95.7% of youth reporting they never or rarely wore one in 2003.
- Ninth- to 12th-grade males in Mississippi were more likely to report driving while drinking than females, but females were equally as likely to ride with a driver who had been drinking. For both topics, percentages of adolescent reports in Mississippi improved from 1993 to 2003. Also, the Mississippi percentages were not significantly different than those of the nation as a whole or Alabama in 2003. However, the percentages were still very high that year: 30.9% stated that they rode with a drinking driver, and 12.8% said they had driven while drinking in the past 30 days.
- Mississippi adolescent males were more likely than their female counterparts to report carrying a weapon. Mississippi percentages improved on this topic from 1993 to 2003, and in 2003 Mississippi was not significantly different from the United States or Alabama, with 20% of 9th-12th graders stating they carried a weapon in the past 30 days.
- Mississippi adolescent males were more likely than females to report fighting, though there was improvement in the percentages of reports of fighting in Mississippi from 1993 to 2003. In 2003, 42.4% of males and 19.5% of females reported fighting in the past year.

WELL-BEING

The interconnectedness of family education and structure, full-time employment with a living wage, and child poverty is well-established. These associations are clearly evident in Mississippi, where the interplay of these factors often undermines the economic underpinnings and well-being of children, their families and communities. In this section, we examine Mississippi rates for single-parent families, parental employment and child poverty.

- In 2005, almost half of Mississippi's children lived in single-parent families—more than the surrounding states and the nation as a whole. This number significantly increased from 2000. Mississippi also ranked 49th in 2004 for having a very low percentage of female-headed households receiving child support. Ten percent of Mississippi's children, the highest rate of any state in the country (and twice the national rate of 5%), were being cared for primarily by grandparents in 2005. This equates to approximately 74,000 under the age of 18.

DATA

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- Mississippi ranked 50th in the nation in 2005 for having 43% of its children living in a household where no parent had full-time, year-round employment. This percentage was significantly higher than in 2000. Nine percent of children were in low-income homes where no adult held even part-time employment.
- Mississippi leads the nation in child poverty. In 2006, 30% (approximately 220,000 children) were in poverty, compared to 26% in 2000. In 2005, Mississippi had the lowest median family (with child) income of any state in the country.



HEALTH

On many of the health indicators, Mississippi's children are falling far short of the Healthy People 2010 Goals for the nation, as noted throughout this section. Two primary causes are teenage births and the rates of Mississippi babies being born too early and too small. These two important markers need to change in order to improve overall child health. This section also provides an overview of other markers of children's health, including the following: nutritional habits; overweight and obesity; child death and suicide; and alcohol, cigarette and marijuana use. These represent only a sampling of the measures of children's health, but they are nonetheless major influences on the mortality rate of Mississippi's children. Child health is clearly tied to a variety of environmental factors—children's homes and families, schools, peers and communities—and an examination of the impact of each warrants consideration.

- The percentage of babies not seeing their first birthday in Mississippi is the highest in the nation. On average, more than one infant per day is dying in Mississippi. In 2005, 59% of all infant deaths in Mississippi (283 out of 481) occurred during the neonatal period (the first 28 days of an infant's life). Of particular concern is the disparity between rates of Nonwhite infant deaths and White infant deaths, with the Nonwhite infant mortality rate at 15.1 deaths per 1,000 live births (for years 2001-2005), compared to an infant mortality rate of 6.7 for White infants during the same time period. In addition, the percentage of infants being born with low birth weight increased in Mississippi from 2000 to 2004, and Mississippi's percentage was significantly higher than the nation as a whole in 2004.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- There was no significant change in the Mississippi child and teen death rates from 2000 to 2004. In Mississippi, from 1992 to 2001, “other” injuries (including those caused by accidents, fire and burns, and drowning, but not including those caused by motor vehicle crashes) accounted for 31% of all deaths among children ages 1 to 4, followed by motor vehicle crashes (17%). For children ages 5 to 14, other injuries accounted for 28% of all deaths, and motor vehicle crashes accounted for 26%. By the time Mississippi children reach driving age (15 to 19 years old), 43% of deaths are caused by motor vehicle crashes, with homicide (16%), other injuries (12%), and suicide (9%) also claiming lives. In 2004, Mississippi had 181 child deaths and 220 9th- to 12th-grade student deaths, equating to higher than average child and teen death rates in the country. For self-inflicted deaths, in 2003, Mississippi had a significantly lower percentage of 9th- to 12th-grade students than the national average reporting that they had seriously considered suicide (13.5%) and/or made a suicide plan (11.6%).
- Mississippi percentages of reports of tobacco use in 2003 were higher than the nation as a whole on a number of measures. However, recent Mississippi data reveal that current cigarette use among students is on the decline. From 1999 to 2006, the prevalence of current smokers decreased by 43% among Mississippi public high school students and decreased by 65% among public middle school students. In 2003, Mississippi was not significantly different than the nation on a number of measures of alcohol use, with the exception of a higher percentage of students reporting drinking before the age of 13. In 1993, the Mississippi percentage of student reports of recent marijuana use was significantly lower than that of the United States, but by 2003, there was not a significant difference.



- In the years of 1993 and 2003, Mississippi had significantly higher percentages than the United States of 9th- to 12th-grade students reporting they had been sexually active with one or more people in the last three months or that they had been sexually active with four or more people in their lifetime. However, teenage pregnancy rates declined in Mississippi from 1999 to 2005. The Nonwhite pregnancy rate was higher than the White pregnancy rate. Teen births decreased in Mississippi from 2000 to 2004, but in 2004 the state was significantly higher than the United States, Alabama and Georgia. There were 6,543 teen (15-19) births in 2004 in Mississippi.
- Mississippi has the highest percentage of obese citizens in the nation. A lower percentage of Mississippi 9th- to 12th-grade students reported exercising to lose weight or to keep from gaining weight than the nation as a whole in 1999 and 2001, but not in 2003.

MISSISSIPPI'S CHILDREN & FAMILIES

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

EDUCATIONAL SUCCESS

While Mississippi's schools have shown improvement in recent years, a number of Mississippi's children still attend low- and under-performing schools. The educational attainment of children and youth is a critical and necessary component for improving overall community and economic development, particularly in Mississippi where the percentages of children and adults experiencing poverty are persistently high. In addition, schools must be a safe harbor for optimal learning—free from bullying, violence and weapons. The differences between males and females with respect to fighting and carrying a weapon on school property need to be considered in school programming.

- The overwhelming majority of Mississippi school districts are accredited (95%). In addition, there was an increase between 2003-2004 and 2007 in the percentage of schools classified as superior-performing (Level 5).
- Mississippi had a significantly higher percentage of high school dropouts (9%) than the nation as a whole (7.3%) in 2005. In that same year, Mississippi ranked 45th in the nation for its percentage of children (20%) who lived in a household where the household head was a high school dropout.
- Percentages of student reports of carrying a weapon or fighting at school declined in Mississippi from 1993 to 2003. Males were more likely than females to report carrying a weapon or being in a physical fight on school property. Percentages of students reporting that they had property stolen or damaged at school declined in Mississippi from 1993 to 2003.



In each section, we highlight specific policy considerations for these issues. While some considerations are issue-specific, clearly some cut across multiple domains of child well-being: expanding early education options for Mississippi's families with a public pre-Kindergarten program, expanding earned income tax credits for working families, and increasing opportunities and workforce training for Mississippi adults. In addition, in each section, we mention specific legislation and a number of promising programs around the state that are addressing the needs of Mississippi's children.

Full funding of the Mississippi Adequate Education Program in the 2007 Legislative Session is a step in the right direction, as is the appointment of a commission to address funding for at-risk student populations. Furthermore, Governor Haley Barbour's appointment of an Infant Mortality Task Force (November 2007) is indeed needed and welcomed.

NATIONAL KIDS COUNT INDICATORS: Mississippi

Mississippi consistently faces a number of challenges for improving the overall well-being of children in the state. For the years indicated, Mississippi had the lowest ranking in the nation for 5 of the 10 indicators listed in Figure 1, indicating the highest prevalence of these conditions in the United States. These indicators were low-birth-weight babies; teens not attending school or working; children living in families where no parent has full-time, year-round employment; children in poverty; and children in single-parent families.⁴ For four of the remaining five indicators, Mississippi was still near the bottom, and preliminary estimates using cohort data suggest that the state's dropout rate may be higher than previously reported.^{5,6} Underlying many of the other difficulties for children, poverty is prevalent in Mississippi, with almost one-third of children living in poverty in 2006.⁴ While Mississippi showed improvement from 2000-2004 for teen births, the majority of the statistics reveal an unchanging or worsening situation for children since 2000.*

KIDS COUNT Data Book Indicators: Mississippi

| Indicator | Year | Number | Rate of Percentage | Change since 2000* | Rank | Data Book Location |
|--|------|---------|--------------------|--------------------|-----------------|--------------------|
| Low-birth-weight babies (less than 5.5 pounds) | 2004 | 4,956 | 11.6% | Worse | 50 | Page 53 |
| Infant mortality (per 1,000) | 2004 | 420 | 9.8 | Same | 49 | Page 53 |
| Child deaths, ages 1-14 (per 100,000) | 2004 | 181 | 31 | Same | 45 | Page 59 |
| Teen deaths, ages 15-19 (per 100,000) | 2004 | 220 | 102 | Same | 48 | Page 59 |
| Teen births, ages 15-19 (per 1,000) | 2004 | 6,543 | 62 | Better | 49 | Page 50 |
| Teens (16-19) who are high school dropouts ^{oo} | 2005 | 14,000 | 9% | Better | 36 | Page 70 |
| Teens (16-19) not attending school and not working | 2005 | 18,000 | 11% | Same | 45 [†] | Page 68 |
| Children living in families where no parent has full-time, year-round employment | 2005 | 321,000 | 43% | Worse | 50 | Page 32 |
| Children in poverty | 2006 | 220,000 | 30% | Worse [‡] | 50 | Page 34 |
| Children in single-parent families | 2005 | 317,000 | 47% | Worse | 50 | Page 30 |

FIGURE 1

Notes:

The values reported in Figure 1 were taken from the Annie E. Casey Foundation's KIDS COUNT Web site. State-level data are available online at: <http://www.kidscount.org/sld/compare.jsp>. Refer to Appendix B for further information on data sources, definitions and applicable notes for each indicator.

*Change since 2000 judgments were based on statistical significance calculations from the Population Reference Bureau (2007).

^{oo}Preliminary estimates from Mississippi cohort analyses are available on pg. 69.

[†]MS tied with 5 other states for the highest % on this indicator.

[‡]Comparisons for this indicator were between 2000 and 2005 percentages (not 2006).

DATA

QUICK REFERENCE GUIDE

Information related to Mississippi child, family and community indicators has been organized for **quick reference**. Look for these key sections throughout the Data Book.

Healthy People 2010 Goals:

Look for this tab containing relevant national Healthy People 2010 Goals for each indicator. Healthy People 2010 is a set of health objectives for the nation to achieve over the first decade of the new century.

facts:

Look for this section containing state- and national-level facts related to each indicator. Sources for these facts include state and national organizations devoted to providing news and research-based information related to topics featured in this Data Book. See Appendix A for a full listing of specific sources.

key findings:

Look for this section containing an overview of the key data findings for each indicator. Sources for key findings include entities that collect primary and secondary data at the state and national levels on issues related to children. Appendix B provides additional information, including specific data sources, definitions and notes for topic.

NOTE: For the MS KIDS COUNT 2007 Data Book, *statistical significance* was either established by the primary data collection agency or by MS KIDS COUNT using available confidence intervals. Statistical significance indicates that it is statistically unlikely that the relationship occurred by chance. For additional notes about statistical significance determinations, please see the relevant sections of Appendix B.

policy considerations:

Look for this tab containing relevant policy considerations for each indicator. These researched considerations are intended to open discussion and are not exhaustive.