



MISSISSIPPI KIDS COUNT

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African-American Children Face Barriers to Economic and Educational Success in Mississippi

2017 Race for Results report shows need for policies that give all children the chance to compete.

STARKVILLE, Miss.— Mississippi has the largest African-American population of any state, and African-American children comprise 45 percent of the total child population. However, African-American children in Mississippi experience economic, health and education disparities compared to their white counterparts.

The 2017 *Race for Results: Building a Path to Opportunity for All Children* report from the Annie E. Casey Foundation reveals that far more African-American children in Mississippi experience poverty. Just 23 percent of African-American children in Mississippi live above the poverty line, compared to 62 percent of white children. Additionally, African-American children (28 percent) are much less likely to live in a low-poverty area than white children (62 percent).

Growing up in a high-poverty area can affect children's well-being and opportunities. African-American children (84 percent) are less likely to be born at normal birthweight than white children (92 percent). They are also less likely to score at or above proficient in reading in the fourth grade: 14 percent of African-American children compared to 38 percent of white children. This impacts future educational and economic outcomes: 72 percent of African-American young adults ages 19-26 are in school or working, compared to 83 percent of their white counterparts.

"Clearly, children and families in Mississippi face structural barriers to success, particularly African-American children and families. There are swaths of the state with very few employment options for families, limited transportation systems, low access to fresh foods, struggling school systems and dwindling public health services," said Dr. Heather L. Hanna, Co-Director of Mississippi KIDS COUNT.

"We know that all citizens benefit when there is an equitable distribution of opportunities among the state's population: Improved educational outcomes lead to increased job opportunities and higher incomes, which in turn expands the tax base and improves quality of life for all Mississippi residents," Hanna added.

This is the second *Race for Results* report by the Casey Foundation; the Foundation released the first report in 2014. The report measures children's progress on the national and state levels on key economic, health, and education milestones by racial and ethnic groups. The report's index uses a composite score of these milestones on a scale of one (lowest) to 1,000 (highest) to make comparisons.

In both the 2014 report and the current report, when compared to other states, Mississippi was ranked in the bottom 10 for outcomes for African-American and white children. However, African-American children fared much worse than white children across the nation, and the same was true in Mississippi. The state received an index score of 290 for African-American children and an index score of 596 for white children. Still, there are a number of measures that policymakers can take to ensure all children in Mississippi have adequate opportunities for success.

As noted in the 2017 *Race for Results* report: “We know what children need: strong families; environments that support healthy early brain development; and the opportunity to develop social and emotional skills. And we know children need financial stability, which requires an inclusive economy that allows parents to secure meaningful work; to earn a stable and adequate income; to build assets and savings; and to balance work and family responsibilities.”

Better outcomes can be promoted through public policies. The 2017 *Race for Results* report recommends increasing economic opportunities for parents and helping children to reach key developmental milestones. Additional recommendations from the Annie E. Casey Foundation suggest states 1) gather and analyze racial and ethnic data to inform all phases of programs, policies and decision-making, 2) use data and impact assessment tools to target investments to yield the greatest impact for children of color, and 3) develop and implement promising and evidence-based programs and practices focused on improving outcomes for children and youth of color.

Hanna notes, “Strategic planning on the part of state policymakers can not only work toward leveling the playing field for African-American children in Mississippi, but also improve outcomes for all children in the state, ensuring a brighter future.”

Release Information

The 2017 *Race for Results* report will be available October 24 at 12:01 a.m. EDT at www.aecf.org/raceforresults/. Additional information is available at www.aecf.org/. The website also contains the most recent national, state and local data on numerous indicators of child well-being. Journalists interested in creating maps, graphs and rankings in stories about *Race for Results* can use the Data Center at datacenter.kidscount.org.

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About Mississippi KIDS COUNT

Established in 2007, Mississippi KIDS COUNT is housed within the Family and Children Research Unit at the Social Science Research Center on the campus of Mississippi State University. Funded through a grant from the Annie E. Casey Foundation, MS KIDS COUNT provides data, statistics, and original research about the health, education, safety and well-being of children to policy makers, educators, program administrators and others. Visit kidscount.ssrc.msstate.edu for more information.

About the Annie E. Casey Foundation

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.