

Children in Central Cities and Rural Communities Experience High Rates of Poverty

SARAH SAVAGE

On August 26, 2008, the U.S. Census Bureau released new data on child poverty showing that over 13 million children are living in poverty, 22% of rural children and 25% of children living in central cities. On average, rates are persistently higher in rural parts of the country relative to suburban areas and share similar rates with many central cities. The child poverty rate is the most widely used indicator of child well-being because poverty is closely linked to undesirable outcomes in areas such as health, education, emotional welfare, and delinquency.

Table 1 shows child poverty rates for each state by level of urbanization, and how child poverty rates vary by place size within and across states. Release of data from the Census Bureau's new American Community Survey (ACS) provide state-by-state measures of child poverty, useful for cross-sectional comparisons.

The data shown here are based on the official poverty measure as determined by the U.S. Office of Management and Budget. The official poverty measure consists of a series of income thresholds based on family size and composition. The 2007 poverty level was \$21,027 for a family of two adults and two children.

AUTHOR

Sarah Savage (sarah.savage@unh.edu) is a research assistant at the Carsey Institute and a Ph.D. candidate in sociology at the University of New Hampshire.

This fact sheet is available online at http://www.carseyinstitute.unh.edu/publications/FS_RuralChildPoverty_08.pdf.

Key results include:

- At the national level, the rural child poverty rate of 22% is 9 percentage points higher than in suburban areas and approaches the rate in central cities (25%).
- In 17 states, rural child poverty is higher than rates in both suburban and urban areas.
- The rural child poverty rate in 2007 ranges from a low of just 7% in Connecticut to a high of 35% in Mississippi.
- 13 southern states have rural child poverty rates above 25% in 2007, which reflects the pervasive child poverty problem in the rural South. This trend is consistent with 2005 data.
- The state with the biggest percentage point discrepancy between rural rates of child poverty relative to suburban is Mississippi (18 percentage points higher in rural), followed by Arizona and South Dakota (15 percentage points) and Louisiana (14 percentage points).
- The state with the biggest percentage point discrepancy between rural rates of child poverty relative to urban is Alaska (10 percentage points higher in rural), followed by Arizona (9 percentage points), and Vermont (8 percentage points).
- No states¹ show lower rates of child poverty in rural than suburban areas, but 28 states have lower rates of rural child poverty than urban areas, led by Delaware with a rate of 22 percentage points lower in rural than in urban areas.
- Relative to 2005 ACS data, in 2007, 5 states (Utah, Wyoming, Colorado, Louisiana, and Tennessee) show increases of 2 percentage points or more in the rural child poverty rate.

¹The rate of child poverty in Connecticut is higher in suburban than rural areas but by a negligible amount (0.1 percentage points).

TABLE 1. CHILD POVERTY BY PLACE SIZE¹ IN 2007

2007 AMERICAN COMMUNITY SURVEY ²									
	RURAL			SUBURBAN			CENTRAL CITY		
	Population under age 18 for whom poverty is determined	Below poverty	Percent below poverty	Population under age 18 for whom poverty is determined	Below poverty	Percent below poverty	Population under age 18 for whom poverty is determined	Below poverty	Percent below poverty
United States	11,261,978	2,470,113	21.9	38,231,184	4,915,107	12.9	23,172,749	5,711,880	24.6
Alabama	312,419	85,393	27.3	517,906	105,520	20.4	276,449	78,173	28.3
Alaska	44,398	8,681	19.6	35,549	3,178	8.9	84,253	7,905	9.4
Arizona	123,962	38,498	31.1	699,559	110,221	15.8	817,656	182,191	22.3
Arkansas	261,930	75,631	28.9	224,298	47,066	21.0	203,483	55,108	27.1
California	163,010	30,023	18.4	4,779,476	726,538	15.2	4,280,075	834,734	19.5
Colorado	146,314	27,446	18.8	602,131	67,803	11.3	426,433	96,476	22.6
Connecticut	65,988	4,965	7.5	521,804	39,810	7.6	219,382	44,598	20.3
Delaware	39,083	5,324	13.6	137,960	15,828	11.5	23,214	8,230	35.5
Florida	213,234	45,881	21.5	2,766,845	419,660	15.2	993,116	212,497	21.4
Georgia	435,312	112,604	25.9	1,655,871	248,022	15.0	398,361	129,755	32.6
Hawaii	84,010	9,499	11.3	138,430	13,801	10.0	60,646	4,308	7.1
Idaho	133,805	23,665	17.7	149,832	19,849	13.2	117,181	20,077	17.1
Illinois	353,369	61,535	17.4	1,748,363	191,974	11.0	1,056,147	271,785	25.7
Indiana	334,145	59,934	17.9	723,664	83,300	11.5	492,807	124,376	25.2
Iowa	293,004	43,151	14.7	201,962	12,720	6.3	200,799	38,715	19.3
Kansas	234,666	39,571	16.9	234,365	20,759	8.9	214,139	39,260	18.3
Kentucky	403,867	118,272	29.3	350,296	60,677	17.3	228,287	56,010	24.5
Louisiana	286,744	97,066	33.9	481,040	94,404	19.6	291,432	91,880	31.5
Maine	108,379	20,000	18.5	128,672	15,399	12.0	36,221	6,574	18.1
Maryland	67,065	7,387	11.0	1,032,806	81,706	7.9	236,840	50,965	21.5
Massachusetts	N/A	N/A	N/A	1,075,934	97,150	9.0	327,358	84,917	25.9
Michigan	402,225	78,842	19.6	1,348,129	169,128	12.5	659,531	220,430	33.4
Minnesota	306,476	40,956	13.4	670,230	55,985	8.4	262,015	51,708	19.7
Mississippi	414,116	145,499	35.1	245,338	41,706	17.0	92,425	33,241	36.0
Missouri	356,249	76,827	21.6	751,618	95,399	12.7	290,905	75,667	26.0
Montana	138,729	28,256	20.4	32,184	3,675	11.4	45,470	7,729	17.0
Nebraska	175,588	28,217	16.1	112,874	9,204	8.2	149,186	27,888	18.7
Nevada	47,822	6,658	13.9	317,485	41,452	13.1	268,449	47,018	17.5
New Hampshire	89,935	7,939	8.8	152,173	8,086	5.3	41,307	7,249	17.5
New Jersey	N/A	N/A	N/A	1,832,999	175,297	9.6	207,053	60,801	29.4
New Mexico	167,586	46,561	27.8	153,191	39,159	25.6	165,643	38,088	23.0
New York	321,208	62,451	19.4	1,850,097	158,523	8.6	2,176,750	623,450	28.6
North Carolina	627,266	152,741	24.4	881,395	124,175	14.1	671,860	149,131	22.2
North Dakota	72,532	11,104	15.3	28,472	2,263	7.9	40,120	5,570	13.9
Ohio	519,300	96,657	18.6	1,563,722	189,486	12.1	621,869	214,602	34.5
Oklahoma	305,667	77,038	25.2	317,237	49,045	15.5	259,690	72,472	27.9
Oregon	180,155	38,097	21.1	391,167	56,100	14.3	275,451	49,194	17.9
Pennsylvania	409,103	68,812	16.8	1,739,933	173,754	10.0	590,301	204,266	34.6
Rhode Island	N/A	N/A	N/A	153,252	19,743	12.9	78,327	20,725	26.5
South Carolina	247,059	64,441	26.1	651,266	116,340	17.9	144,758	37,469	25.9
South Dakota	101,886	21,667	21.3	38,009	2,257	5.9	53,698	8,587	16.0
Tennessee	360,948	95,218	26.4	584,607	87,555	15.0	495,433	148,496	30.0
Texas	716,042	191,147	26.7	2,823,183	484,496	17.2	2,985,230	837,176	28.0
Utah	87,274	15,099	17.3	563,722	45,392	8.1	156,612	28,250	18.0
Vermont	82,597	12,294	14.9	N/A	N/A	N/A	36,322	2,485	6.8
Virginia	228,094	44,220	19.4	1,097,471	97,875	8.9	469,666	91,746	19.5
Washington	173,022	34,740	20.1	904,517	111,189	12.3	429,548	80,495	18.7
West Virginia	167,309	43,991	26.3	170,897	30,745	18.0	40,371	11,541	28.6
Wisconsin	327,940	46,878	14.3	600,439	48,290	8.0	368,200	91,812	24.9
Wyoming	84,612	11,580	13.7	N/A	N/A	N/A	26,098	1,820	7.0
Northeast	1,091,678	178,901	16.4	7,491,186	690,247	9.2	3,686,524	1,053,708	28.6
Midwest	3,477,380	605,339	17.4	8,021,847	880,765	11.0	4,409,416	1,170,400	26.5
South	5,086,155	1,361,853	26.8	13,938,416	2,104,820	15.1	7,923,294	2,089,487	26.4
West	1,606,765	324,020	20.2	8,779,735	1,239,275	14.1	7,153,515	1,398,285	19.5

N/A = Not applicable.

¹Levels of urbanization are defined as follows: rural consists of ACS geographic components "Not in metropolitan or micropolitan statistical area" and "In micropolitan statistical area"; suburban includes "In metropolitan statistical area—not in principal city" and central city includes "In metropolitan statistical area—in principal city".

²Data are based on 2007 American Community Survey estimates. For corresponding margins of error, refer to the US Census American Community Survey.