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Rural Life Census Data Center Newsletter: South Dakota's Child Poverty Change

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South Dakota's Child Poverty Change

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When people think of poverty in the United States, many picture inner-city ghettos with homeless men begging for money on a street corner. Yet poverty is often more severe in rural areas and affects children more than any other group (Tickameyer and Duncan 1990). In 2005, nearly all of the United States counties with the highest percentage of children in poverty were rural (O'Hare and Mather 2008).

CONSEQUENCES OF CHILD POVERTY

Children living in poverty suffer severe setbacks, including lower self-esteem and poor health (Children's Defense Fund 2006; Morton and Blanchard 2007). These children thus experience such poor health effects as disability and premature death (Braveman 2007). Children bear no responsibility for living in poverty, but they are penalized not only in childhood but also later in life because their health and/or education suffer from a lack of resources (Allegretto 2008). A child's poverty status influences almost all aspects of his or her future. For example, those who are poor are less likely to attend college and are more likely to work in lower-paying jobs (Weeks 2005).

Poverty varies by age and race. Compared with teenagers, children under the age of 5 are much more likely to be in poverty (Douglas-Hall and Chao 2007). Race and ethnicity are also important factors in determining a child's poverty status (U.S. Department of Agriculture 2003). For example, American Indians have higher child poverty rates compared with whites (American Community Survey 2006).

Reducing child poverty is essential at all levels. At first glance, many see poor children and their families as the only victims of poverty. However, in the long run, the community, state, and even the entire nation bear the cost of child poverty (U.S. Department of Agriculture 2003). Children living in poverty are at higher risk of being unhealthy and uneducated. This decreases their productivity, making them less self-reliant (U.S. Department of Agriculture 2003).

POVERTY DEFINED

Defining poverty is not easy and is often controversial. The income and household guideline for defining poverty is called the "poverty threshold" and is one measure of federal poverty (Health and Human Services 2008). The poverty threshold is based on family size and the age and number of children living in a household. The poverty threshold is used to determine who is eligible for programs such as Women, Infants and Children (WIC) and the Child's Health Insurance Program (CHIP).

For a detailed discussion about poverty and the poverty threshold, see <http://www.census.gov/hhes/www/poverty/poverty.html>.

CHILD POVERTY TRENDS

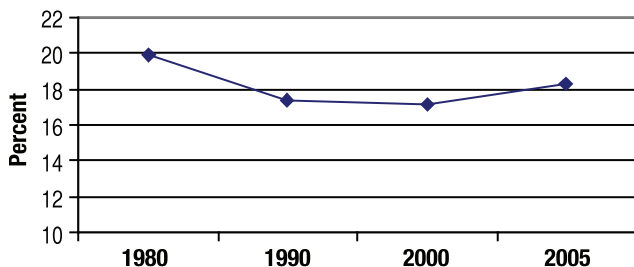
South Dakota's child poverty rate declined slightly from 1980 to 2005 (fig. 1). In 1980, almost 20% of South Dakota children under the age of 18 were living in poverty (American Community Survey 2006). In 2000, the child poverty rate dropped to 17.1% (American Community Survey 2006). However, the rate had risen to 18.3% in 2005 (American Community Survey 2006).

There is no single answer that explains South Dakota's recent child poverty increase. It is most likely a combination of several factors. Changing household structures and economic changes are just two of the many factors that affect South Dakota's child poverty.

Household structure has an important bearing on poverty. Over half of all children in poverty live in single-parent households (Douglas-Hall and Chao 2007). The percentage of single-parent households in South Dakota increased from 9.23% in 2000 to 12.72% in 2005. Families headed by single parents not only must rely on one income, but the parent is also often forced to work limited hours. Moreover, a good portion of their income goes towards childcare. This leaves less money for taking part in other activities that are advantageous for children, such as taking music lessons or joining a sports team.

Despite common belief, children in poverty usually have at least one employed parent. Less than 20% of children in poverty live in a household where no one works (Douglas-Hall and Chao 2007). A society that has increased its unemployment rate is likely to experience increased poverty rates (Seccombe 2000).

Figure 1. Percent of South Dakota's children under the age of 18 living in poverty (1980–2005)

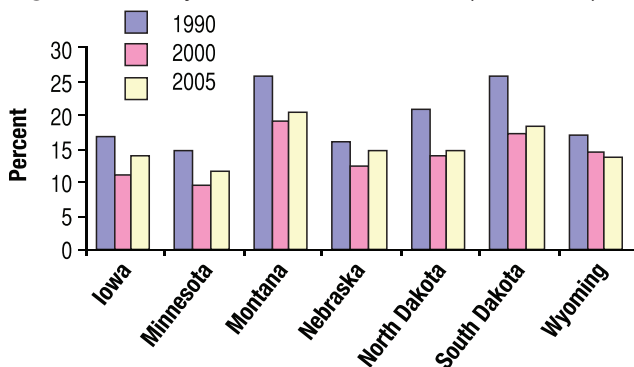


Source: U.S. Census Bureau

POVERTY RATES IN SURROUNDING STATES

Poverty rates for children under the age of 18 for South Dakota and bordering states indicate that child poverty rates were higher in 1990 than in 2000 (fig. 2). From 2000 to 2005, only Wyoming continued to decrease its child poverty rate. In 2005, South Dakota's child poverty rate was higher than all surrounding states except Montana.

Figure 2. Poverty rates for selected states (1990–2005)



Source: U.S. Census Bureau

CHILD POVERTY COUNTY COMPARISONS

In 2005, Ziebach County had the highest child poverty rate, followed by Todd County (table 1). Overall, in South Dakota, the child poverty rate decreased in 29 counties and increased in 37 counties from 2000 to 2005 (app. 1).

In 2005, nine of the 100 U.S. counties with the highest child poverty rates were located in South Dakota (O'Hare and Mather 2008). Each of these counties has a high percentage of American Indian residents. Counties with an American Indian reservation tend to have more single-parent households and higher unemployment rates (Snipp 1992).

In 2005, Ziebach County had the highest child poverty

rate in the nation, with 70% of the county's children under the age of 18 living in poverty (O'Hare and Mather 2008). This is over eight-percent higher than Kentucky's Owsley County, which was reported to have the second highest child poverty rate in 2005 (O'Hare and Mather 2008).

South Dakota's most poverty-stricken counties also tend to be lightly populated (O'Hare and Mather 2008). ("The lower the density, the higher poverty and child poverty rates are likely to be" [O'Hare and Mather 2008: 1]). It may be difficult to build or maintain an economy in an area that is isolated from the rest of the state. Poor road conditions and longer travel distances further push families and their children into poverty (Iceland 2005).

Table 1. South Dakota counties with the highest child poverty rates in 2005

Rank	County	Percent in Poverty
1	Ziebach	70.1
2	Todd	58.7
3	Corson	57.8
4	Mellette	51.3
5	Bennett	47.2

Source: American Community Survey 2006

Lincoln and Union counties had South Dakota's lowest child poverty rates in 2005 (table 2). In South Dakota, counties that offer short commutes to larger cities benefit from low poverty rates. Each of the counties listed below is adjacent to a city that provides diverse employment and recreational and other opportunities.

Table 2. South Dakota counties with the lowest child poverty rates in 2005

Rank	County	Percent in Poverty
1	Lincoln	5.5
2	Union	7.5
3	Brookings	10.1
4	Sully	10.2
5	Turner	10.4

Source: American Community Survey 2006

COUNTY POVERTY CHANGE FROM 2000–2005

Of all counties, Buffalo County had the greatest child poverty *decrease* from 2000 to 2005 (table 3). Charles Mix County experienced the highest child poverty *increase* from 2000 to 2005 (table 4).

Explaining why some counties reduced child poverty while others increased it is complicated—especially when dealing with rural counties (because there are generally few children). An entire county's child poverty rate may change quickly, even if just a few families experience poverty changes. Each county has its own factors that contribute to poverty change.

Some of the counties that had the largest *decrease* in child poverty experienced growth in local governmental jobs from 2000 to 2005. Many of these local government jobs were tribal jobs. This is true for Buffalo and Shannon counties. In just five years, both of these counties more than doubled the number of local government jobs. From 2000 to 2005, Shannon County gained 2,322 local government jobs, which is an 802% increase. These tribal government jobs may pay enough for an employee and his/her family to avoid poverty, and also decrease the unemployment rate.

Table 3. South Dakota counties with largest decrease in child poverty from 2000 to 2005

Rank	County	2000 Child Poverty Percentage	2005 Child Poverty Percentage	2000-2005 Change
1	Buffalo	61.79	43.5	-18.29
2	Shannon	61.02	46.8	-14.22
3	Jerauld	31.34	20.2	-11.14
4	Hanson	23.28	12.5	-10.78
5	McPherson	26.07	17	-9.07

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Counties that *increased* child poverty from 2000 to 2005 were less likely to have experienced an increase in local government jobs (i.e., Bureau of Indian Affairs jobs). This may be because many of these counties do not have an official tribe within the county boundaries. This is true for Mellette County. Also, several of the counties listed below experienced increasing unemployment rates from 2000 to 2005. For example, Charles Mix County's unemployment rate increased from 2.9% in 2000 to 4.3% in 2005.

Table 4: South Dakota counties with largest increase in child poverty from 2000 to 2005

Rank	County	2000 Child Poverty Percentage	2005 Child Poverty Percentage	2000-2005 Change
1	Charles Mix	35.61	45	9.39
2	Corson	48.75	57.8	9.05
3	Ziebach	61.21	70.1	8.89
4	Campbell	7.71	13.8	6.09
5	Mellette	46.04	51.3	5.26

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

There are several things that can be done to help reduce child poverty. For example, creating local government jobs has helped some reservation counties lower their child poverty rates. Also, improving access to social programs such as childcare may help rural counties gain a resource to reduce the impact of child poverty. By resulting in higher educational attainment and higher earnings, good schools and social programs such as “early childhood development intervention” can indirectly but powerfully reduce poverty (Braveman 2007).

Finally, community members can use their networks to improve conditions for those in poverty (Putman 2000; Rupasingha and Goetz 2007). Programs can be developed that address certain community needs. For example, community members could develop quality day care that is flexible for parents who work weekends or evenings.

CONCLUSION

South Dakota's child poverty rate increased from 2000 to 2005. A variety of factors, including changing household and job structures, contributed to this poverty increase. In 2005, American Indian reservation counties had the highest child poverty rates. Counties with easy access to a larger city had the lowest child poverty rates. Local government jobs helped some counties lower their child poverty rate. Other counties experienced an increased unemployment rate, which may have contributed to an increased child poverty rate. Finally, the economic costs associated with child poverty are enormous. Reducing child poverty can both save and generate money, which can benefit all.

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Appendix 1: 2000 and 2005 child poverty percentages and percent change for South Dakota counties

County	% of Children in Poverty (2000)	% of Children in Poverty (2005)	2000 to 2005 Child Poverty Change
Aurora	14.32	17.5	3.18
Beadle	14.21	15.4	1.19
Bennett C	48.80	47.2	-1.60
Bon Homme	16.80	17.1	0.30
Brookings	10.37	10.1	-0.27
Brown	10.78	12.5	1.72
Brule	17.12	20.6	3.48
Buffalo	61.79	43.5	-18.29
Butte	17.88	19.7	1.82
Campbell	7.71	13.8	6.09
Charles Mix	35.61	45	9.39
Clark	20.33	19.6	-0.73
Clay	16.72	17.6	0.88
Codington	9.08	12.5	3.42
Corson	48.75	57.8	9.05
Custer	13.22	17.7	4.48
Davison	11.84	13.6	1.76
Day	17.62	19.8	2.18
Deuel	10.47	11.5	1.03
Dewey	38.21	35.1	-3.11
Douglas	16.84	16	-0.84
Edmunds	16.84	12.8	-4.04
Fall River	19.33	23	3.67
Faulk	24.82	16.4	-8.42
Grant	9.91	11.4	1.49
Gregory	24.72	23.9	-0.82
Haakon	18.74	14.5	-4.24
Hamlin	17.13	14.7	-2.43
Hand	9.07	12.5	3.43
Hanson	23.28	12.5	-10.78
Harding	22.75	16.6	-6.15
Hughes	7.81	12	4.19
Hutchinson	18.53	15.9	-2.63

County	% of Children in Poverty (2000)	% of Children in Poverty (2005)	2000 to 2005 Child Poverty Change
Hyde	13.44	15.1	1.66
Jackson	46.34	46.1	-0.24
Jerauld	31.34	20.2	-11.14
Jones	28.34	25	-3.34
Kingsbury	13.68	14.2	0.52
Lake	8.71	10.8	2.09
Lawrence	18.69	17.6	-1.09
Lincoln	5.06	5.5	0.44
Lyman	34.32	30.2	-4.12
McCook	9.02	11	1.98
McPherson	26.07	17	-9.07
Marshall	19.30	16.3	-3.00
Meade	12.47	13.1	0.63
Mellette	46.04	51.3	5.26
Miner	14.65	14.2	-0.45
Minnehaha	9.29	12.6	3.31
Moody	11.65	12.3	0.65
Pennington	16.27	19.2	2.93
Perkins	21.97	22.4	0.43
Potter	17.98	13.2	-4.78
Roberts	30.38	26.9	-3.48
Sanborn	23.02	20.6	-2.42
Shannon	61.02	46.8	-14.22
Spink	17.52	17.2	-0.32
Stanley	10.96	12	1.04
Sully	13.35	10.2	-3.15
Todd	57.75	58.7	0.95
Tripp	21.75	23.8	2.05
Turner	6.52	10.4	3.88
Union	5.29	7.5	2.21
Walworth	25.98	24.6	-1.38
Yankton	10.16	12.6	2.44
Ziebach	61.21	70.1	8.89

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