

# Essay: Place, Income, and Race Matter

still use corporal punishment in public schools. In other words, one in four students are vulnerable to the unintended consequences that go along with this type of discipline simply because of the school district they live in.

## Income Matters

The United States is a land of opportunity where young people from a variety of backgrounds can become successful adults. Yet children whose parents are poor face additional and unnecessary obstacles to overcome. Low-income children across the nation fare worse on indicators of well-being, in areas such as economics, education, health, and social and emotional well-being.<sup>3</sup> In 2007, over 13 million children in the U.S. (18 percent) and 235,000 Kentucky children (24 percent) lived in poverty.<sup>4</sup>

Kentucky is one of the states faring poorest in the disparities between outcomes for higher-income and low-income children. Low-income Kentucky children fare worse than low-income children in other states in health status and social and emotional well-being.<sup>5</sup>

In 2005, the most recent year for which county-level data was available, 220,222 Kentucky children (23 percent) were living below the federal poverty line, a 2 percentage point increase from 2000 (see page 8). Child poverty levels increased in all but seventeen counties over that period, increasing by more than 10 percentage points in McCreary, Martin, and Nicholas Counties. The number of counties with one quarter or more of children living in poverty also increased over the five-year period, from 51 in 2000 to 67 in 2005.

Differences in income contribute to disparate child outcomes, such as the following:

- ▶ The percent of babies born at low birthweight varied by income for most race groups. Statewide, 10 percent of births primarily funded by Medicaid (which provides a measure of a mother's income) were low weight, compared to 8 percent of births primarily funded through private insurance or other sources.

- ▶ Low-income students make up approximately half of the student population, yet they received a disproportionate number of disciplinary actions (74 percent for board violations and 63 percent for law violations).

## Race Matters

In a nation where children of color now know that they too can become president, work remains in Kentucky to support children in realizing their dreams. Many youth of color face limited opportunities, due to a lack of resources in communities of color and inadvertent bias in systems. Historical factors, such as housing policies, have created neighborhoods with little investment where there are concentrations of people of color. Additionally, systems too often unintentionally treat youth differently or fail to serve all youth because they do not address cultural differences in delivering services.

White children comprise the largest portion of the child population in Kentucky at 85.1 percent. African-American children make up 10.2 percent of the child population, 3.3 percent are Hispanic, 1.2 percent are

Asian, and 0.2 percent are American Indian.

While Hispanic children comprised only 3 percent of Kentucky children in 2007, they are the fastest growing child population in the state.<sup>6</sup> From 2000 to 2005, Kentucky was ranked ninth in the nation in percent change in the foreign-born population.<sup>7</sup>

In 2005, the counties with the largest populations of children of color, as a percentage of the total child population were Fulton (38 percent), Christian (36 percent), Jefferson (34 percent), and Fayette (30 percent) (see page 7).

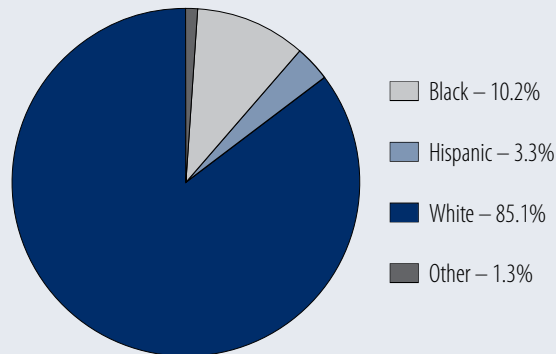
Throughout the book, we find disparate outcomes among races. For example, young children of color face higher risk of lead poisoning because they are more likely to live in older homes. Or, while no substantial differences exist among races in rates of youth committing crime, youth of color are more likely to have cases sent for formal court processing and more likely to be detained.

## Place, Income, and Race Intersect

The intersection of place, income, and race present different challenges in ensuring all children in Kentucky have opportunities to succeed in life. Disparate economic opportunities among geographic regions in Kentucky lead to higher child poverty rates in rural areas. In 2005, 34 percent of Kentucky children living in poverty lived in rural communities, compared to 18 percent living in metropolitan areas. With rural areas having the largest population of all children and the highest rate of child poverty, geographic disparities require immediate attention in Kentucky.

Metropolitan areas in Kentucky have the most ethnic diversity, while micropolitan areas have the least (93 percent of children are White). Sixty-two percent of Black children live in metropolitan areas, comprising 18 percent of Kentucky's metropolitan child population. In contrast, 59 percent of White children live in rural areas, making up 90 percent of the rural child population. Hispanic children are also more likely to live in rural

**Kentucky Children by Race and Hispanic Ethnicity, 2007**



Source: National Center for Health Statistics, Processed by Kentucky Population Research at the University of Louisville Urban Studies Institute.

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**Kentucky Child Population Estimates by Race & Ethnicity, 2007**

	Black		Hispanic		White		Other	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
<b>Statewide</b>	102,241	10	33,466	3	854,756	85	13,510	1
<b>Metropolitan</b>	63,862	18	14,847	4	273,637	76	7,149	2
<b>Micropolitan</b>	3,358	4	2,063	2	79,772	93	634	1
<b>Rural</b>	35,021	6	16,556	3	501,347	90	5,727	1

Source: National Center for Health Statistics.

and rural areas. Changes in state policy prove to be a successful tool for reducing disparities and improving outcomes for all children on large-scale issues. But they are certainly not the only solution. Local strategies play a critical role in addressing the unique needs of communities. The important step is to identify the gaps in opportunities for youth in Kentucky and work to close them by place and income, and by race, which transcends all. As a state that wants to continue building a strong future for our children and grandchildren, it is in everyone's interest to do so.

- 1 Annie E. Casey Foundation (2006). "Unequal Opportunities in Education." *Race Matters Toolkit*. Available at <http://www.aecf.org>. Accessed November 2008.
- 2 Ibid.
- 3 Vandivere, S., O'Hare, W., Atienza, A., and Rivers, K. (2007). *States Ranked on the Basis of Child Well-Being For Children in Low-income Families*. Annie E. Casey Foundation. Available at <http://www.aecf.org>. Accessed November 2008.
- 4 Annie E. Casey Foundation website. KIDS COUNT Data Center. Available at <http://www.kidscount.org>. Accessed November 2008.
- 5 Vandivere, S., O'Hare, W., Atienza, A., and Rivers, K. (2007). *States Ranked on the Basis of Child Well-Being For Children in Low-income Families*. Annie E. Casey Foundation. Available at <http://www.aecf.org>. Accessed November 2008.
- 6 Kentucky Youth Advocates (2007). *New Voices from the Bluegrass: A Portrait of Kentucky's Children in Immigrant Families*. Available at <http://www.kyyouth.org>. Accessed November 2008.
- 7 Ibid.
- 8 Annie E. Casey Foundation website. KIDS COUNT Data Center. Available at <http://www.kidscount.org>. Accessed November 2008.
- 9 Churilla, A. (2008). *Urban and Rural Children Experience Similar Rates of Low-Income and Poverty*. Carsey Institute. Available at <http://www.carseyinstitute.unh.edu/>. Accessed November 2008.

areas (49 percent).

Unequal economic opportunities among races become evident in the poverty rates by racial group. In 2005, child poverty rates in Kentucky were higher among groups that have experienced systemic lack of access to opportunities, at 30 percent for Hispanic/Latino children and 32 percent for Black/African-American children, compared to 21 percent for non-Hispanic White children.<sup>8</sup> Though data is unavailable for Kentucky, national data show that youth of color experience similar rates of poverty in rural areas and

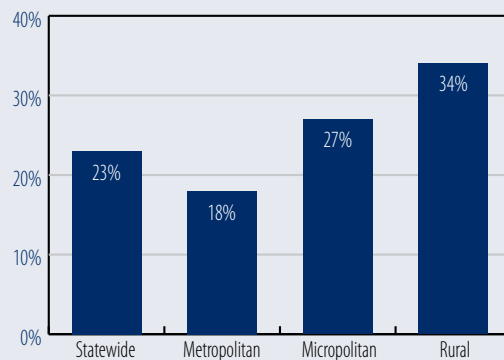
urban areas, while rates are lower in suburban areas.<sup>9</sup>

Exploring data not only by race but also geography provides additional information about areas of concern:

- ▶ Though rates of babies born at low birthweight were similar across geographic areas overall, rates were lowest among births to White women in metropolitan areas. Among Black women, rates were lowest in micropolitan and rural areas.
- ▶ Fewer than 200 child deaths occurred statewide in 2005, but differences appear by geography and race. Child death rates were lower among Black children than White children overall, yet the rate in micropolitan areas for Black children was substantially higher than for White children.
- ▶ Rates of births to teen mothers were substantially higher in micropolitan areas and lower in rural areas. This trend held for births to Black women and White women, while rates were slightly higher among Hispanic women in metropolitan areas.

All Kentucky children need opportunities for good outcomes in life, yet low-income children and children of color face many challenges to success. Lack of opportunity is not confined to one geographic region or another, and differences by income and race often intersect differently in metropolitan, micropolitan,

**Child Poverty Rates in Kentucky by Area, 2005**



Source: US Census Bureau, Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates.