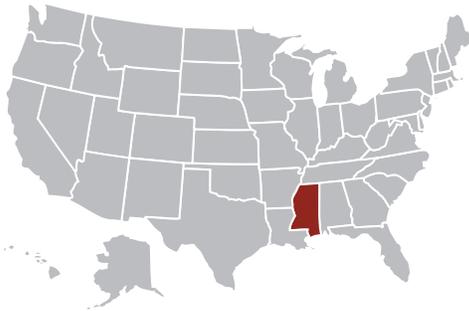


Issue Brief

EDUCATION IN MISSISSIPPI



As of 2009, almost half (45.5%) of all 4th graders in Mississippi public schools scored below basic on reading proficiency and 30.9% scored below basic on mathematics proficiency.

WHAT IS SOCIETAL DISTRESS?

Societal distress describes living conditions that do not satisfy basic human needs, such as food, shelter, health, income, and education.

Visit www.humanneeds.vcu.edu for more details.

What is education?

Educational attainment is the highest grade of school an individual attends and completes. **Educational proficiency** measures a student's mastery of skills and understanding. High school dropout rates are defined here as the percentage of students in grades nine through 12 who dropped out of school in the past year (*event dropout rate*) or the percentage of 16- to 24-year-olds who are not enrolled and have not yet completed high school (*status dropout rate*).

How many Mississippi residents are affected?

In 2007–2008:

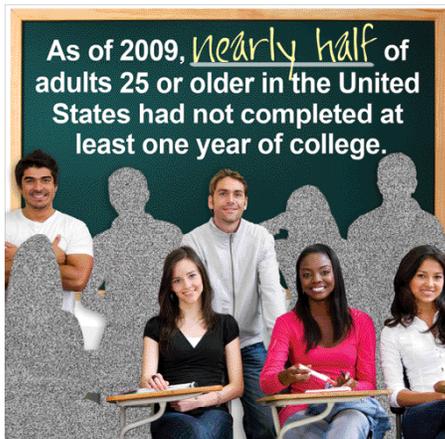
- 4.6% of Mississippi public school students in grades 9-12 dropped out of school (event dropout rate) in the preceding year.
- The freshman graduation rate in Mississippi was 63.9%, compared to 74.9% nationally.

As of 2008:

- 20.1% of adults (age 25 and older) in Mississippi—about 374,000 persons—had not completed high school, and 50.2% had not attended one or more years of college.
- 7.3% of adults (age 25 and older) in Mississippi had less than a 9th grade education and 3.1% had completed less than 7 years.

As of 2009, the most current year for which data are available:

- 38.4% of 8th graders scored below basic on reading proficiency and 45.7% scored below basic on basic on mathematics proficiency in all schools (public and private).



THE PROJECT ON SOCIETAL DISTRESS is an initiative of the Virginia Commonwealth University Center on Human Needs, which examines the prevalence of societal distress in five domains—food security, housing, health, education, and income—and makes the information available to the public and policymakers. This research effort focuses on presenting accurate data on the number of Americans affected by these conditions and not examining the causes or proposing solutions. The Project on Societal Distress is funded by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation.

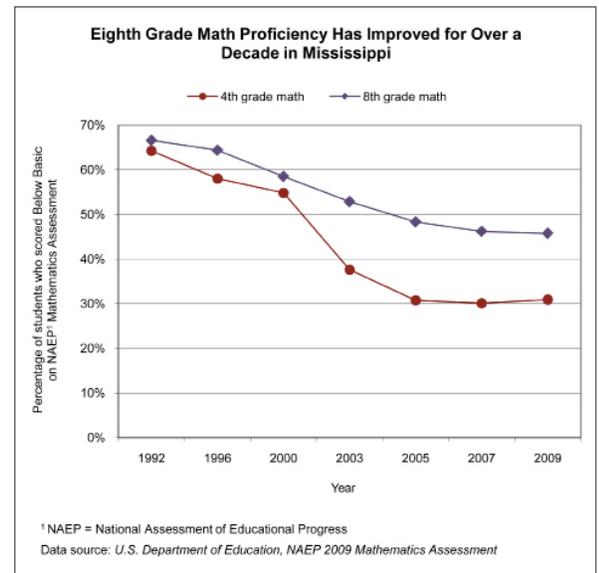
In Mississippi in 2005–2007, 69.9% of blacks had completed high school, compared to 82.6% of whites.

WHY DOES IT MATTER?

Poor education limits future prospects for employment, earnings, housing, and health. It is a growing problem in an era based on a knowledge economy. An inadequate education can perpetuate a cycle of distress for families across multiple generations.

What are the trends?

Between 1992 and 2009, the percentage of Mississippi 4th and 8th grade students who scored below basic in mathematics proficiency assessments decreased by 33.3 and 20.9 percentage points, respectively.



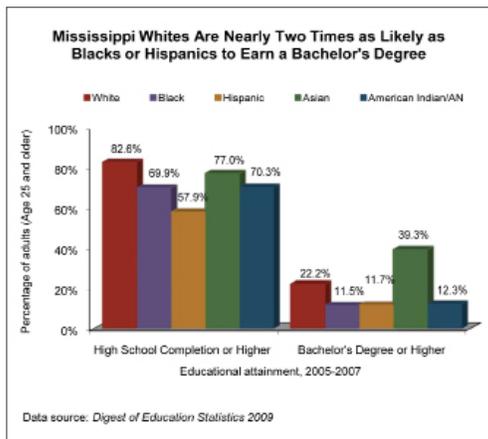
Who is affected?

Males: In 2007–2008, the event dropout rate in Mississippi was higher for males (5.5%) than females (3.7%).

Seniors: In 2008, one out of three (34.1%) older adults (age 65 and older) in Mississippi had not completed high school.

Minorities: In 2009, the percentage of persons age 25 and older who completed a bachelor's degree was 22.2% among whites, 11.5% among blacks, and 11.7% among Hispanics.

The Poor: In 2009, average reading proficiency scores were lower among low-income Mississippi 4th graders eligible for the National School Lunch Program than among non-poor students who were ineligible (203 vs. 227).



SOURCES AND METHODS

The statistics reported here were obtained from the U.S. Department of Education, *Digest of Education Statistics, 2009*. The data underwent statistical analysis by the research staff of the Virginia Commonwealth University Center on Human Needs. Analytic methods are detailed at www.humanneeds.vcu.edu.

THE VIRGINIA COMMONWEALTH UNIVERSITY CENTER ON HUMAN NEEDS (www.humanneeds.vcu.edu) was chartered in 2007 to provide the public and policymakers with information about the prevalence of societal distress in the United States. Its mission is to document how many Americans confront food insecurity, precarious housing or homelessness, inadequate health and health care, inferior education, and inadequate income/poverty.

For more details, visit www.humanneeds.vcu.edu.