



Mississippi
Economic Policy
Center

4 Old River Place, Suite A, Jackson, MS 39202-3434
Voice: 601-944-1100 • Fax: 601-944-0808
www.mepconline.org

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Contact: Ed Sivak

Office: 601-944-4174

Cell: 601-672-2734

E-mail: esivak@ECD.org

How Much Does It Cost To ‘Get By’ In Mississippi?

*New Report Details Characteristics Of Working Families Not Able To Make Ends Meet
County-By-County Data Available*

JACKSON – A new report: *Overlooked and Undercounted: Struggling to Make Ends Meet in Mississippi* finds that nearly one in three Mississippi households does not earn enough money to cover their basic living expenses.

An audio news briefing to release the report will be held via toll-free number at 10:30 a.m. on Wednesday, December 16, at: 866-699-3239
(Pass Code: 20280429)

“Over the past several years, incomes have not grown at nearly the same pace as basic living costs in Mississippi” says Ed Sivak, Director of the Mississippi Economic Policy Center. “As a result, targeted training programs that prepare working Mississippians for good paying jobs and workforce supports are more important than ever.”

The report goes one step deeper into the issues covered by the recently released *Self Sufficiency Standard For Mississippi 2009* and takes an in-depth look at the families that live and work below the self sufficiency marker. Information in the report is broken down by family type, race, gender, size, educational attainment and employment patterns.

Overlooked and Undercounted: Struggling to Make Ends Meet in Mississippi explains that while lack of adequate income is found disproportionately among certain groups, such as African Americans, women headed households, and families with young children, income inadequacy is experienced throughout Mississippi among all types of households.

Additionally, the report raises questions about a number of commonly held misperceptions about working families. For example, households with incomes above the Self-Sufficiency Standard work only about 14% more hours per year than those whose incomes fall below the Self-Sufficiency Standard. Working families with earnings below the Self Sufficiency Standard are working hard; however, their wages are simply not enough to make ends meet. Likewise, only 4% of households with incomes below Self Sufficiency Standard levels receive public assistance.

Over half (55%) of households in Mississippi with less than a high school education have inadequate incomes. The rate drops quickly as education increases, falling to just 12 % for those with a college degree or more. Education, however, does not fully narrow the gender and racial gaps in income, as similarly educated women and people of color earn less than their white, male

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counterparts in Mississippi.

The report concludes with a call for broad-based policy efforts that include workforce training and workforce supports to increase opportunities for Mississippi’s households to move toward and beyond self sufficiency.

Mississippi’s report was authored by Dr. Diana Pearce, director, Center for Women’s Welfare, University of Washington School of Social Work, with support from the Enterprise Corporation of the Delta, Mississippi Economic Policy Center, the William Winter Institute of Racial Reconciliation, the Women’s Fund of Mississippi and the Insight Center for Community and Economic Development.

The Report is Available Online at www.mepconline.org.

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About the Mississippi Economic Policy Center

The Mississippi Economic Policy Center is an independent, nonpartisan initiative that undertakes rigorous and timely analysis on issues that affect the economic and social well-being of working families and low-wealth Mississippians. MEPC is managed by the Enterprise Corporation of the Delta, a regional financial institution and community development intermediary dedicated to strengthening communities, building assets and improving lives in economically distressed areas across the Mid South. More information is available on-line at www.mepconline.com.

About the Center for Women’s Welfare

The Center for Women’s Welfare at the University of Washington School of Social Work is devoted to furthering the goal of economic justice for women and their families. The main work of the Center focuses on the development of the Self-Sufficiency Standard. The Center partners with a range of government, non-profit, women’s, children’s, and community-based groups to research and evaluate public policy related to income adequacy; create tools to assess and establish income adequacy; and to develop programs and policies that strengthen public investment in low-income women, children, and families. For more information about the Center’s programs, or work related to the Self-Sufficiency Standard, call (206) 685-5264.

About the William Winter Institute

The William Winter Institute for Racial Reconciliation fosters reconciliation and civic renewal wherever people suffer as a result of racial discrimination or alienation and promotes scholarly research, study and teaching on race and the impact on race and racism.

About the Women’s Fund of Mississippi

The Women’s Fund of Mississippi is dedicated to improving the lives of women and girls and promoting long-term social change through fundraising, strategic grant making, and advocacy. More information is available on-line at www.womensfundms.org.

About the Insight Center for Community Economic Development

Founded in 1969, the Insight Center for Community Economic Development (Insight Center) is a national research, consulting and legal nonprofit organization dedicated to bringing economic health and opportunity in low-income communities. The Insight Center utilizes a wide array of community and economic development strategies including: advancing industry-focused workforce development, building individual and community assets, and strengthening the early

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care and education industry. The Insight Center was one of four organizations that launched the Family Economic Self Sufficiency Project and one of five organizations that launched the Elder Economic Security Initiative™, innovative, nation-wide efforts to gain support for proven strategies to help low-income families and retired elders reach economic security. The Insight Center leads these efforts in California, which are based on the California Family Economic Self Sufficiency Standard and California Elder Economic Security Standard Index™ data. The national effort is organized in partnership with Washington, D.C.-based Wider Opportunities for Women (WOW).