

Abstract

Mississippi is a financially poor state with nearly a quarter of its population living in poverty. This paper examines the county level relationships among poverty, race, and economic well-being and educational attainment in the state of Mississippi. We used poverty, race, education, and wage-related data collected by federal and state agencies to define statistical relations among the socio-economic variables. The findings show that there are statistically significant relationships among poverty, wage, education attainment, unemployment, and race. Poorer Mississippi counties and cities have shown higher black populations, lower wages, and high unemployment. Poverty impacts all races in Mississippi, but its most serious impacts are felt among black Mississippians. Wages and educational attainment tend to be worse in areas populated by more black persons than white persons, particularly in more rural areas. There are a number of policy alternatives available to help ameliorate this crisis such as increasing wages of Mississippi's public employees, increased funding for public education, and a state-based Earned Income Tax Credit. These options have incredible potential to lift thousands of Mississippians, particularly racial minorities, out of chronic cycles of poverty.