Welcome and Introduction

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The *JustSouth Index* measures and compares states’ performance on *nine quantitative indicators* that fall under *three dimensions:* poverty, racial disparity and immigrant exclusion.

All 50 states, plus the District of Columbia, were scored.
THE POVERTY DIMENSION

The Poverty Dimension includes three indicators that measure economic wellbeing and access to a basic standard of living for the poorest residents of each state.

**Average Income of Poor Households**
Average annual income of households in the lowest quartile of income in the state

**Health Insurance Coverage for the Poor**
Percent of persons in the lowest quartile of income that do not have health insurance coverage

**Housing Affordability**
Percent of households in lowest income quartile with a housing cost burden
THE RACIAL DISPARITY DIMENSION

The Racial Disparity Dimension includes three indicators that measure segregation and disparities in economic opportunity based on race.

Public School Integration
Percent of public schools segregated by race

White-Minority Wage Equity
Percent difference in earnings between white workers and workers of color of similar age, level of education, and occupation

White-Minority Employment Equity
Gap in unemployment rate between white and minority workers
THE IMMIGRANT EXCLUSION DIMENSION

The Immigrant Exclusion Dimension includes three indicators that measure social inclusion, economic opportunities, and basic services available to immigrant residents of a state.

**Immigrant Youth Outcomes**
Percent of immigrant youth ages 18 to 25 who are not in school and not working

**Immigrant English Proficiency**
Percent of immigrants with difficulty speaking English

**Health Insurance Coverage for Immigrants**
Gap in health insurance rate between immigrant and native-born populations
According to our report, the five Gulf South States mostly ranked at the bottom of our Index. Specifically, they ranked as follows:

- Florida #37
- Alabama #48
- Texas #49
- Louisiana #50
- Mississippi #51
The four Gulf South states that occupied the last four positions in our ranking system scored poorly in all three dimensions of the Index: Poverty, Racial Disparity and Immigrant Exclusion.
Most notable is the concentration of all of the Gulf South states at the bottom of the poverty dimension:
| Table 2: JustSouth Index 2019
<table>
<thead>
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<th>Dimension Scores* and Rankings</th>
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*For the dimension raw scores, numbers are rounded to the thousandth place. In our dataset, these numbers extend well beyond.
Mississippi moved into last place, overall.

The state ranked last in 2 of the 3 dimensions: poverty and immigrant exclusion. And ranked 46th in racial disparity.
Out of the Gulf South States, Louisiana had the **lowest percentage** of low-income people without health insurance, likely due to it being the **only state in the region to have accepted the Medicaid expansion**.

Texas and Mississippi had the **highest percentage** of low-income people without health insurance.
Key findings for the Gulf South

Mississippi, Louisiana and Alabama ranked 51st, 49th and 48th, respectively, in average income among low-income households.

### Average Annual Income of Households in the Lowest Income Quartile

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<th>STATE</th>
<th>Average Annual Income</th>
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<td>$12,185</td>
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<td>FL</td>
<td>$15,632</td>
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<td>LA</td>
<td>$11,888</td>
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<td>MS</td>
<td>$10,826</td>
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<tr>
<td>TX</td>
<td>$16,580</td>
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<tr>
<td>US AVERAGE</td>
<td>$16,830</td>
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<tr>
<td>MAX - UT</td>
<td>$23,168</td>
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<tr>
<td>MIN - MS</td>
<td>$10,826</td>
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</tbody>
</table>


Louisiana and Alabama have the second and third largest gaps in annual earnings between white and minority workers of similar age, level of education, and occupation.

In both states, minority workers earn about 16.8 percent less than their white counterparts, compared to a national average gap of 10 percent.
Mississippi and Louisiana have the second and third highest percentage of immigrant youth ages 18-25 that were considered “disconnected.”

The term “disconnected” refers to those who are not attending school and do not have regular employment.
JUSTSOUTH INDEX 2019 FACT SHEET

LOUISIANA

JUSTSOUTH INDEX RANKINGS (OUT OF 51)

POVERTY

RACIAL DISPARITY

IMMIGRANT EXCLUSION

OVERALL

44

47

50

50

Largest gap in health insurance coverage between native and foreign-born residents in the U.S.

Lowest average income among low-income households in the U.S.

Highest percentage of foreign-born disconnected youth in the U.S.

Largest white-minority wage gap in the U.S.

2nd

3rd

3rd

2nd

ACTION STEPS

- Legislate a state minimum wage significantly higher than the federal minimum of $7.25 per hour and rescind the 1997 preemption law banning municipal minimum wages.
- Aggressively investigate discriminatory labor practices.
- Make available more resources to educate all residents about various benefits available to them via the Affordable Care Act (ACA).
- Support foreign-born youth by increasing funding and access to GED and job training programs.

Average Income of Poor Households

Percent of Poor without Health Insurance

Percent of Poor with High Housing Cost Burden

Percent of Segregated Schools

White-Minority Wage Gap

White-Minority Unemployment Rate Gap

Share of Immigrant Disconnected Youth

Share of Immigrants with Difficulty Speaking English

Gap in Health Insurance Rate, Immigrant and Native-Born Residents

LA $11,888

LA 18.3%

LA 63.3%

LA 21.5%

LA 16.8%

LA 2.9%

LA 20.5%

LA 32.0%

LA 24.8%

Largest white-minority wage gap in the U.S.

Lowest average income among low-income households in the U.S.

Highest percentage of foreign-born disconnected youth in the U.S.

2nd

3rd

3rd

2nd
An important finding from our examination of the national data:

States that have raised the minimum wage and expanded Medicaid eligibility generally ranked higher than states that chose not to do so.
Recommendations

Raise the minimum wage.

JSRI supports the “fight for 15”—the effort around the country to move either the national minimum wage or the various state minimum wages to eventually $15 per hour.

The federal minimum of $7.25/hr. is much too low. 29 states have enacted higher minimum wages.

Florida is the only Gulf South state with a higher minimum wage and NOW the voters there have just chosen to raise the wage to $10 effective next fall and to eventually reach $15 by 2026!
Recommendations

Expand Medicaid

We urge all states to expand Medicaid to include all households with incomes below 138% of the federal poverty level.

To date, 37 states have done so.

**Louisiana is the only Gulf South state to expand Medicaid to the benefit of some half-million Louisiana residents.**

SOURCE: Kaiser Family Foundation, kff.org
Initiate/expand state Earned Income Tax Credit programs

Initiate state Child Tax Credit programs

Improve access to English as a Second Language (ESL) and adult education classes

Increase resources to schools that primarily serve poor, minority and immigrant students

Combat employment discrimination and workers’ rights violations through enhanced enforcement efforts by federal, state, and nonprofit entities
Economic growth, higher wages, better education, and expanded access to needed healthcare services are all possible in the richest country in the world.

They are even possible in the “poorer” parts of the country, like here in the Deep South.

It is a matter of marshalling the political will to make the policy changes necessary.

We can transform the lives and life chances of the people across the region and country if we have the moral and political will to do so!
Special thanks to Millicent Eib and Kelsey McLaughlin for their invaluable contributions to this project.

THANK YOU to all who are with us today!

Questions?

For follow-up interviews or other inquiries, contact the Jesuit Social Research Institute at (504) 864-7746 or jsri@loyno.edu