Saint John Paul II described social justice as concerning the social, political, and economic aspects and, above all, the structural dimension of problems and their respective solutions. Creating a socially just society, therefore, requires critical analyses of the structures of our society to determine if they perpetuate inequity or enhance justice. In the United States, levels of justice vary greatly between and among regions and states.

In the Gulf South states—Texas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, and Florida—policy and programmatic decisions historically have perpetuated inequity and left the poor, immigrants, and racial minorities without the ability to meet their basic human needs. Although some progress has been made, the history of injustice in the Gulf South states continues to manifest itself in contemporary social, political, and economic systems.

By measuring and comparing all 50 states and Washington, D.C. on nine social justice-related indicators, the JustSouth Index provides a strong starting point for determining not only where inequity is most problematic but also what systemic factors contribute to the inequity. The JustSouth Index also provides guidance regarding how citizens and leaders in the Gulf South can change this picture.
The nine indicators included in the JustSouth Index were selected specifically because they represent fundamental rights and needs of the human person. Other indicators related to civic participation, homeownership, and higher education are not included because they are not as pertinent to the most basic aspects of human life and dignity or they are not measured and reported on a regular basis for each state. Each indicator included in the index also is measurable and actionable, meaning that improvement is possible if sufficient political and social will is focused on taking the required steps forward.

The JustSouth Index is intended to be a point-in-time measure of how a state’s residents are faring with regard to poverty, racial disparity, and immigrant exclusion and to highlight opportunities for growth. In other words, the Index serves as a starting point for advocacy and responsible civic action. It allows those working to increase justice and equity to measure progress and celebrate successes. The Index also highlights areas in which conditions are worsening in a state or a region, illustrating the need for focused action.

This project drew inspiration from the well-established Human Development Index, or HDI, created by the United Nations in 1990 as a new approach to defining, measuring, and comparing human well-being around the world. The HDI focuses on three key dimensions of human well-being: health, education, and standard of living in 187 countries. Released annually, the HDI report sheds light on the advances and setbacks to human development within those dimensions by measuring a set of representative indicators and calculating a composite index score for each country. In doing so, its authors aim to influence the agenda-setting and decision-making processes that impact human well-being in each country.

The goal of the JustSouth Index is similar, albeit on a much smaller scale. Like the HDI, this index is intended to stimulate dialogue, foster accountability, and shape solutions. Indicator projects, however, are not without limitations, as the director of the Human Development Report Office, Selim Jahan, noted: “A concept is always broader than any of its proposed measures. Any suggested measure cannot fully capture the richness, the breadth, and the depth of the concept itself.” His statement rings true in the case of the JustSouth Index because the rich concept of social justice cannot be wholly captured by any single set of measures. The indicators included in the JustSouth Index, however, are among the nine most fundamental components of social justice and cut across the three areas of human well-being included in the Human Development Index: health, education, and standard of living.

What is social justice?

Justice, as defined by Catholic social teaching, is not a simple human convention. As St. John Paul II stated, “what is just is not first determined by the law but by the profound identity of the human being.” Every person’s right to human dignity is derived from his or her creation in the image of God; therefore, social, political, and economic aspects of society must serve to protect and promote the inherent dignity of individuals. Although justice is not a human convention, human behaviors, institutions, and systems can increase or decrease the level of justice in society.

A just society is one that fosters the common good. This concept, which is fundamental to Catholic social teaching, is defined in the Catechism of the Catholic Church as, “social conditions that allow people, as groups or as individuals, to reach their fulfillment more fully and more easily.” To attain the common good, individuals must have the material, cultural, and spiritual resources needed to achieve full development and contribution to society. It is the duty of political institutions to ensure the civil society is organized in such a way that those resources are available to every citizen.

In fact, the common good is the reason that the political authority exists, and political leaders must “harmonize the different sectoral interests with the requirements of justice” in order to achieve it. Policies and systems detract from social justice when they are inherently biased and perpetuate inequity rather than ameliorate it. The growing gap between the rich and poor in the U.S. is evidence of underlying economic policies that make the rich wealthier and keep the working poor from earning enough to live a dignified life. Policies that prohibit access to services and support systems further marginalize immigrants rather than promote solidarity. Finally, policies that maintain segregation of schools and housing keep racial minorities from achieving their full potential. Together these policies create an inequitable distribution of wealth, opportunity, and privilege. This leaves many without the ability to participate meaningfully in the economy and thus also unable to fully provide for themselves and their families. It also prevents them from enjoying the economic security, education, and good health essential to human well-being.

Measures of Social Justice

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>POVERTY</th>
<th>RACIAL DISPARITY</th>
<th>IMMIGRANT EXCLUSION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Average Income Per Household</td>
<td>Public School Segregation</td>
<td>Immigrant Youth Outcomes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health Insurance Coverage for the Poor</td>
<td>White-Minority Wage Equity</td>
<td>Immigrant English Proficiency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housing Affordability</td>
<td>White-Minority Employment Equity</td>
<td>Health Insurance Coverage for Immigrants</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

March 2016
Measuring Social Justice

To measure progress toward social justice, the JustSouth Index isolates individual factors that represent the distribution of wealth, opportunity, and privilege in each state. The nine indicators included in the index are categorized into the three aforementioned dimensions: poverty, racial disparity, and immigrant exclusion. Although there are many elements of society that contribute to social justice, these three dimensions are most relevant to the region’s history and to the social, economic, and political challenges faced by residents and communities in the Gulf South states. Together the three dimensions illustrate the levels of material deprivation as well as discrimination and exclusion across states that are pivotal to explaining current levels of social justice in America and the Gulf South.

Social Justice in Three Dimensions

POVERTY

Poverty rates in the Gulf South states, calculated using the federal poverty line, historically have been significantly higher than other regions of the country, making it a particularly pressing issue in this region. The Poverty Dimension of the JustSouth Index provides a holistic illustration of how the poorest in each state are faring by including indicators related to health care access and housing and not just income. The lack of affordable health insurance coverage and housing options among the poor contributes to economic poverty and also undermines the ability to work, to be educated, and to live a long and healthy life. For example, health insurance provides a safety net that allows individuals to seek medical treatment when needed, which prevents prolonged absences from work or school. Those without health insurance are less likely to receive preventive care, are more likely to be hospitalized for conditions that could have been prevented, and are more likely to die in the hospital than those with insurance.11 What’s more, uninsured families struggle financially to meet basic needs, and medical bills can quickly lead to medical debt, placing further strain on vulnerable households.

RACIAL DISPARITY

Race is a critical consideration of social justice. Both systemic and individual-level racial discrimination divides communities and inhibits large racial groups in society from achieving their full potential and contributing fully to the common good. The disproportionate advantages for white Americans in relation to persons of color in virtually every sphere of life illustrate the deep divisions that exist despite the passage of Civil Rights Acts and the election of the first African-American president.14 Acknowledging and countering the lingering effects of slavery, Jim Crow laws, and racial prejudice are imperative steps to creating a more just society, especially in the Gulf South states.

IMMIGRANT EXCLUSION

The treatment of immigrants is an important dimension of social justice because it represents the way in which a society protects or denigrates human dignity based on nation of origin. As St. John XXIII explained, “The fact that one is a citizen of a particular state does not detract in any way from his membership in the human family as a whole, nor from his citizenship in the world community.”15

The selected indicators under each dimension are annually updated socioeconomic measures that are also clear, reliable, and actionable. Each indicator serves as a marker of the current state of social justice and as a baseline that can be compared across states and time. Because they are actionable, states and communities have the possibility of improving their scores on each indicator every year. Some indicators that are also important in measuring material deprivation, exclusion, and discrimination were not included because they are either not actionable or the data is not annually updated.

In its 1986 pastoral letter, Economic Justice for All, the National Conference of Catholic Bishops proclaimed that dealing with poverty is a moral imperative of the highest priority.11 Ensuring that all people are able to enjoy a basic standard of living preserves human dignity and strengthens the common good of the whole society. Alternatively, those living in poverty suffer from material deprivation and negative psychosocial effects that undermine their dignity, diminish their life prospects, and reduce their ability to contribute to the common good.10 The common good, a basic concept of Catholic social teaching, describes the interconnectedness of individuals in society and the general social conditions that are equally to everyone’s advantage. The U.S. and Mexican bishops expanded upon that notion in 2003, saying, “Regardless of their legal status, migrants, like all persons, possess inherent dignity that should be respected.”16 The way that each U.S. state and community responds to newcomers has a direct impact on social justice. States in the Gulf South have experienced a significant influx of immigrants into their work forces in recent years. They have not yet, however, made adequate adjustments to their social, economic, and political systems in order to promote justice and dignity for immigrant residents. In addition, treatment of immigrants in the Gulf South states is colored by a history of discrimination against Hispanics and African Americans. Accordingly, the JustSouth Index Immigrant Exclusion Dimension includes indicators related to the treatment of immigrants and immigrant integration.
The Indicators

Within the dimensions of poverty, racial disparity, and immigrant exclusion, indicators were selected that fulfilled the following criteria:

- Measure socioeconomic well-being
- From clear and reliable data source
- Updated annually
- Are common to all states
- Are actionable

The Poverty Dimension

includes three indicators that measure economic well-being and access to a

- Average Income Per Household
  - 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 who do not have health insurance coverage
- Housing Affordability
  - Percent of renter households in lowest income with a high housing cost burden

The Racial Disparity Dimension

includes three indicators that measure segregation and disparities in economic opportunity based on race:

- Public School Segregation
  - Percent of public schools segregated by race
- White-Minority Wage Equity
  - Percent difference in earnings between white and minority workers of similar ages, levels of education, and occupations
- White-Minority Employment Equity
  - Gap in unemployment rate between white and minority workers

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

Developing the Dimension and Index Scores

The methodology for calculating the indicator scores and JustSouth Index rankings is based on the United Nations’ Human Development Index “goalpost approach” to measuring well-being. All 50 states and Washington, D.C., were given a score on each of the nine indicators in relation to the highest and lowest observable indicator values. The state with the highest indicator value was given a score of 1, and the rest of the states received a standardized score between 0 and 1 according to their respective indicator values.

The three indicator scores under each of the three dimensions were used to calculate the Poverty, Racial Disparity, and Immigrant Exclusion Dimension index scores. This was done by calculating the arithmetic mean of each group of indicators. The arithmetic mean was used because each indicator is considered independent from the other indicators. The arithmetic mean weights each of the indicators equally, which means that a high or low score on one indicator can drastically affect a state’s dimension score.

With each dimension being a proxy for social justice, the dimensions are not independent of one another. As a result, in order to create an overall JustSouth Index, the geometric means of the dimension scores were used. The geometric mean “normalizes” the scores being combined so that no score dominates the weighting. This ensures that very high or low scores on one dimension do not drastically affect a state’s overall score. As with the individual indicator scores, each dimension index score falls between the “goalposts” of 0 and 1, with the highest scores closest to 1 and the lowest scores closest to 0.

The Results

On the overall JustSouth Index rankings, most Gulf South states rank at the bottom of the list. Specifically, Alabama, Texas, Mississippi, and Louisiana earned the bottom four rankings, respectively (see Table 1). Florida placed the highest of the five Gulf South states at 41st on the JustSouth Index. These results indicate the vast amount of work to be done to increase social justice in the region. Measures to increase income equity, access to health insurance coverage, racial equality, and community support for immigrants will improve social justice and preserve human dignity in the Gulf South states. The states’ scores on the three dimension indices and individual indicators provide more detailed information regarding specific areas of social justice in which each state is lacking. (See Table 2 and Table 3, page 8). Overall, states that have increased the state minimum wage, created robust income support programs, taken action to reduce racial disparities, and enacted policies that support rather than hinder the integration of immigrants scored higher on the JustSouth Index ranking and the underlying dimension indices.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STATE</th>
<th>JustSouth INDEX RANKING</th>
<th>JustSouth INDEX SCORE</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>VT</td>
<td>0.9045 1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NH</td>
<td>0.8525 2</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>HI</td>
<td>0.7461 3</td>
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<td>MA</td>
<td>0.7456 4</td>
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<tr>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>VA</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>MD</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>ND</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<tr>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>NY</td>
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<tr>
<td>RI</td>
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<tr>
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<td>ID</td>
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<tr>
<td>FL</td>
<td>0.5084 41</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AZ</td>
<td>0.5072 42</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SC</td>
<td>0.5055 43</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AR</td>
<td>0.5019 44</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GA</td>
<td>0.4786 45</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>NM</td>
<td>0.4741 46</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>DC</td>
<td>0.4598 47</td>
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<tr>
<td>AL</td>
<td>0.4572 48</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>TX</td>
<td>0.4517 49</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MS</td>
<td>0.3869 50</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LA</td>
<td>0.3814 51</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

TABLE 1
The results, continued from page 7

The map visualization groups states into six categories: more or less near the national average, moderately above or below average, and greatly above or below average. The six categories are based on whether states’ index and dimension scores are:

- Less than 0.25 standard deviation from the national average in either the positive or negative direction
- Between 0.25 and 1 standard deviation from the national average in either the positive or negative direction, or
- More than 1 standard deviation from the national average in either the positive or negative direction

### GULF COAST STATES: Raw Indicator Scores

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STATE</th>
<th>Average Income of Poor Households</th>
<th>Percent of Poor Without Health Insurance</th>
<th>Percent of Poor with High Housing Cost Burden</th>
<th>White-Minority Wage Gap</th>
<th>White-Minority Unemployment Rate Gap</th>
<th>Share of Immigrant Disconnected Youth</th>
<th>Share of Immigrants with Difficulty Speaking English</th>
<th>Gap in Health Insurance Rate, Immigrant and Native-Born Residents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AL</td>
<td>$11,379</td>
<td>27.83%</td>
<td>88.74%</td>
<td>24.13%</td>
<td>12.49%</td>
<td>6.75%</td>
<td>11.58%</td>
<td>32.36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FL</td>
<td>$13,890</td>
<td>33.15%</td>
<td>93.73%</td>
<td>7.77%</td>
<td>8.78%</td>
<td>3.11%</td>
<td>15.60%</td>
<td>32.33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LA</td>
<td>$11,156</td>
<td>32.07%</td>
<td>90.63%</td>
<td>22.13%</td>
<td>21.01%</td>
<td>5.78%</td>
<td>21.50%</td>
<td>34.78%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MS</td>
<td>$9,891</td>
<td>35.25%</td>
<td>88.08%</td>
<td>23.29%</td>
<td>19.77%</td>
<td>6.14%</td>
<td>16.35%</td>
<td>30.56%</td>
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<tr>
<td>TX</td>
<td>$14,776</td>
<td>36.07%</td>
<td>89.72%</td>
<td>8.97%</td>
<td>13.91%</td>
<td>2.52%</td>
<td>19.71%</td>
<td>41.68%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>US AVERAGE</td>
<td>$15,281</td>
<td>21.16%</td>
<td>85.90%</td>
<td>15.55%</td>
<td>8.75%</td>
<td>4.05%</td>
<td>15.23%</td>
<td>28.21%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 2

#### GULF COAST STATES: JustSouth INDEX and Dimension Indices Rankings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STATE</th>
<th>POVERTY DIMENSION</th>
<th>RACIAL DISPARITY DIMENSION</th>
<th>IMMIGRANT EXCLUSION DIMENSION</th>
<th>JustSouth INDEX</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AL</td>
<td>0.3911</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>0.4963</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FL</td>
<td>0.3213</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>0.7222</td>
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<td>LA</td>
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<tr>
<td>MS</td>
<td>0.2996</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>0.4411</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TX</td>
<td>0.3830</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>0.6788</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Dimension 1: Poverty

**Indicator 1: Average Annual Income of Households in the Lowest Income Quartile**

Stagnant wages and rising costs of living have created a class of “working poor” who simply cannot earn enough to cover their basic expenses. Unemployment and underemployment continue to plague particular regions and states, adding to the challenges households face in getting by and getting ahead. Many low-income households rely on income supports such as federal and state Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) programs; the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP); Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) cash assistance; and child care assistance to bridge the gap between what they earn and the cost of basic necessities. In the Gulf South states, however, the investment in economic security of low-income working households. The federal government provides funding to states for TANF in the form of a block grant. States have great discretion regarding setting eligibility criteria and benefit levels for their cash assistance programs. The amount of TANF funding that actually goes to cash assistance has decreased substantially, especially in the Gulf South states. For example, the maximum TANF monthly benefit for a single-parent family of three in Mississippi is $170 compared to $506 in Oregon and $653 in Wisconsin. Moreover, substantially fewer poor families qualify for TANF cash assistance programs as eligibility criteria have been tightened in many states since the block grant program went into effect. In 1996, 68 of every 100 poor families received TANF benefits, and in 2014, just 23 of every 100 poor families were receiving benefits. State legislatures must alter eligibility criteria and benefit amounts to ensure that the families in deep poverty can maintain a basic standard of living.

Child care assistance is another cost-effective income support program that contributes to the economic security of low-income working households. The federal government provides the majority of funding for child care assistance in the form of the Child Care and Development Block Grant and the TANF block grant. States, however, have discretion regarding eligibility criteria, copayment requirements, and provider reimbursement rates for their state programs. States also have options regarding how much of their federal TANF block grant funds are devoted to child care subsidies and how much state revenue, if any, will supplement the federal funding. Reduced funding and increasingly restrictive eligibility criteria in certain states limit the number of low-income parents who qualify for assistance. High copayment requirements limit the number of families who can afford child care even with assistance. Investing additional federal and state resources in child care assistance is a “win-win” economic investment for states because it allows parents to maintain stable employment and provides their children the opportunity to learn and develop the skills they need to succeed in school.

**Action Steps**

The most direct way to increase the average income of the poorest households is to increase wages. Data show that in 2013 more than 10 million workers had earnings that were not sufficient to bring them above the federal poverty line, which is just $23,834 a year for a family of four. A powerful tool state leaders can use to boost the earnings of low-income families is a state minimum wage law. Twenty-nine states and D.C. already have created their own minimum wage laws that are higher than the federal minimum wage. Unfortunately, in the Gulf South states, only Florida has enacted its own minimum wage law, which currently is set only modestly above the federal minimum wage at $8.05 per hour. Municipal governments also can take action to raise the local minimum wage.

Also, state EITC programs that supplement the federal EITC program are highly effective in raising families out of poverty. Twenty-five states and D.C. have created state EITC programs, but of the Gulf South states, Louisiana is the only one to have such a program. Albeit a good start, Louisiana’s EITC program is the smallest in the nation at only 3.5 percent of the federal EITC. Comparatively, California allows low-income filers to claim a state tax credit up to 45 percent of the federal credit. State EITC programs generally have bipartisan support, are easy to administer, and nearly every dollar a state spends on its EITC program goes to working families who need help. By allowing low-income workers to keep more of what they earn, EITC programs increase family economic security and encourage the lowest-earning households to remain in the work force and work more hours.

The Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) cash assistance program is another income support program that helps the poorest families meet their basic needs. The federal government provides funding to states for TANF in the form of a block grant. States have great discretion regarding setting eligibility criteria and benefit levels for their cash assistance programs. The amount of TANF funding that actually goes to cash assistance has decreased substantially, especially in the Gulf South states. For example, the maximum TANF monthly benefit for a single-parent family of three in Mississippi is $170 compared to $506 in Oregon and $653 in Wisconsin. Moreover, substantially fewer poor families qualify for TANF cash assistance programs as eligibility criteria have been tightened in many states since the block grant program went into effect. In 1996, 68 of every 100 poor families received TANF benefits, and in 2014, just 23 of every 100 poor families were receiving benefits. State legislatures must alter eligibility criteria and benefit amounts to ensure that the families in deep poverty can maintain a basic standard of living.

Child care assistance is another cost-effective income support program that contributes to the economic security of low-income working households. The federal government provides the majority of funding for child care assistance in the form of the Child Care and Development Block Grant and the TANF block grant. States, however, have discretion regarding eligibility criteria, copayment requirements, and provider reimbursement rates for their state programs. States also have options regarding how much of their federal TANF block grant funds are devoted to child care subsidies and how much state revenue, if any, will supplement the federal funding. Reduced funding and increasingly restrictive eligibility criteria in certain states limit the number of low-income parents who qualify for assistance. High copayment requirements limit the number of families who can afford child care even with assistance. Investing additional federal and state resources in child care assistance is a “win-win” economic investment for states because it allows parents to maintain stable employment and provides their children the opportunity to learn and develop the skills they need to succeed in school.
practical reasons for state leaders to do so. Increasing the region, have chosen not to do so. Eighteen states, including four in the Gulf South dollars, to provide coverage to the poorest persons in Affordable Care Act provided an option for state leaders to enrolling in the program. The 2010 Patient Protection and eligibility criteria for Medicaid in a which is jointly funded by federal and state governments. low-income individuals and families is the Medicaid program, which is jointly funded by federal and state governments. Unfortunately, strict eligibility criteria for Medicaid in a number of states prohibit many low-income persons from engaging in outreach activities to connect with hard-to- reach populations who may not be aware of their eligibility for Medicaid or private insurance subsidies, such as residents of rural areas and immigrant populations.

**Action Steps**

The most efficient way for state leaders to increase the health insurance coverage rate among the poor is to expand Medicaid eligibility to include all who are below 138 percent of the federal poverty line. Also, states can engage in outreach activities to connect with hard-to- reach populations who may not be aware of their eligibility for Medicaid or private insurance subsidies, such as residents of rural areas and immigrant populations. rate of health insurance coverage among the lowest-earning individuals increases their economic potential because healthy individuals are more likely to participate in the work force, have higher productivity on the job, and contribute to the common good of society.\textsuperscript{14,15} Also, persons with health insurance coverage experience less financial instability and are less likely to have to borrow money to pay for medical bills and other living expenses.\textsuperscript{18}

### Indicator 2

**Percent of Persons in Lowest Income Quartile Without Health Insurance**

Catholic social thought holds that access to health care is a basic right that flows from the sanctity and dignity of human life, but it is out of reach for many Americans, especially the poor.\textsuperscript{12} Without private or public health insurance coverage, many low-income persons do not seek medical care when sick or pursue preventive services to avoid illness. When the uninsured do receive medical care, high out-of-pocket costs often lead to medical debt and even greater financial instability. The most common health insurance option for low-income individuals and families is the Medicaid program, which is jointly funded by federal and state governments.\textsuperscript{14} Unfortunately, strict eligibility criteria for Medicaid in a number of states prohibit many low-income persons from enrolling in the program. The 2010 Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act provided an option for state leaders to expand the Medicaid program, largely funded with federal dollars, to provide coverage to the poorest persons in the state. Eighteen states, including four in the Gulf South region, have chosen not to do so.\textsuperscript{14} This ignores not only the moral imperative to ensure access to health care but also the practical reasons for state leaders to do so. Increasing the

### Action Steps

Many states supplement the federal housing assistance funding they receive with state-funded housing subsidies and assistance. A 2015 report on state-funded housing assistance programs found 77 such programs in 30 states.\textsuperscript{41} The state-funded programs vary in size and function, but all are aimed at improving housing affordability and ensuring that low-income persons and families have a secure place to live. Unfortunately, Texas currently is the only Gulf South state to offer a state-funded housing assistance program. Without additional state investment or an unlikely expansion in the level of federal housing funding, the waiting lists and housing insecurity of families in the Gulf South states will continue to grow. States and municipalities also can improve housing affordability by offering incentives to developers and municipalities to encourage the development of affordable housing. For example, states and cities can create incentive housing zones in which developers can request a project-based subsidy for a specified number of affordable rental units developed within the zone. Massachusetts’ lawmakers created a program called Smart Growth Zoning Districts. The program allows municipalities to receive incentive payments for creating zoning districts in which residential development is constructed at higher densities than typically allowed and 20 percent of homes are affordable to low- and moderate-income families. By creating similar programs, the Gulf South states can reduce the share of households that are housing-cost burdened and increase economic security of the most vulnerable households.

### Indicator 3

**Percent of Renter Households in Lowest Income Quartile With a High Housing Cost Burden**

Families who pay more than 30 percent of their total household income for housing are considered by the federal Housing and Urban Affairs Department to be “housing cost-burdened.” For households with limited income, spending a high percentage of their income on rent often does not leave enough money for other essential expenses, such as food, transportation, and medical expenses. Moreover, high rent payments reduce the proportion of income that members of a household can spend in their community, creating a ripple effect of economic distress. Housing subsidies and affordable housing units can alleviate the financial strain faced by families whose earnings have not kept pace with rising costs of rent. Federal housing programs such as the Housing Choice Voucher Program, Section 8 Voucher Program, and public housing help to reduce the share of monthly income that is consumed by rent for some families. Federal spending for housing assistance, however, is not nearly sufficient to meet demand, and only 1 in 4 low-income households paying rent received federal assistance in 2014.\textsuperscript{40} As a result, there are waiting lists for housing assistance in most states, which has prompted states, cities, and nonprofit organizations to develop housing initiatives to supplement the federal efforts.

### Indicator DATA

**Minimum Indicator Value**

- 6.2% of poor are without health insurance coverage (MA)
- 6.2% of poor are without health insurance coverage (TX)

**Maximum Indicator Value**

- 36.1% of poor are without health insurance coverage (TX)

**Average Indicator Value**

- 21.2% of poor are without health insurance coverage

**Gulf South States**

- AL: 27.8%
- FL: 33.2%
- LA: 32.1%
- MS: 35.3%
- TX: 36.1%
Racial Disparity

Indic peace of Public Schools Segregated by Race

School districts made significant progress toward school desegregation in the years following the Civil Rights Act of 1964, but the trend has shifted back toward race-based school segregation as federal oversight has diminished.42 Following a set of Supreme Court decisions in the late 1960s and 1970s that required Department of Education officials to oversee implementation of school desegregation plans, the rate of black students attending majority-white schools increased dramatically, growing from 1 percent in 1963 to 43 percent in 1983.43 After federal oversight was phased out and schools were left to make good faith efforts to maintain integration, there was significant backsliding. In 2012, 74 percent of black students and 80 percent of Latino students attended schools that were 50 to 100 percent minority, and of these, more than 40 percent of black and Latino students attended schools that were 90 to 100 percent minority.44, 45 This trend toward re-segregation represents an injustice because it often means minorities are concentrated in schools that have fewer resources and face challenges attracting and retaining quality teachers.46 A mounting body of evidence indicates that segregation of schools has negative impacts on both short-term academic achievement of minority students and their success in later life.47 Integrated schools have a positive impact on all in attendance through promoting awareness and understanding and ensuring that students have the necessary tools to function in an increasingly racially and ethnically diverse society.48 Not taking intentional steps to ensure that all students have the opportunity to attend quality, integrated schools perpetuates injustice and allows the mistakes of the past to haunt the future.

Indicator 1: Percent of Public Schools Segregated by Race

Measuring School Segregation

School segregation was analyzed in the JustSouth Index by measuring whether a school serves a high proportion of students of a single race and whether the student population of a school is representative of the public school student population in the school’s home county. Specifically, a school was considered segregated if it met two criteria:

1.) More than 90 percent of students attending the school were the same race
2.) The racial composition of the school’s student population was significantly different (5 percentage points) than that of the overall public school student population in the county.

Action Steps

To reverse the trend toward re-segregation of public school systems, states and districts must implement the policies that are designed in the same spirit and intentionality as those that were effective in integrating schools in the 1970s and 1980s. These tools included redrawing of school district boundaries, allowing intra- and inter-district transfers, subsidizing transportation, and increasing school choice through charter and magnet schools. Strategic housing development and community planning are also necessary since housing segregation is a powerful driver of many forms of racial inequality, including segregated schools.49 Ultimately, the appropriate policy tools for increasing integration in public schools depend on the individual district and the students it serves, but in districts where schools are becoming less diverse, decisive action by local leaders is critical. States and school districts also should increase the share of resources allocated to schools serving a large percentage of minority students. Additional funding would allow those schools to attract and retain high-quality teachers, and provide critical support services for at-risk students. Funding quality early child care and pre-kindergarten programs, early grade reading programs, reduced class sizes, and counseling can help offset the challenges often faced by minority students.

Indicator 2: Percent Difference in Earnings Between White and Minority Workers of Similar Age, Level of Education, and Occupation

In 1986, the U.S. Catholic Conference of Bishops denounced the existence of employment discrimination based on race in the United States as a scandal that could never be justified.50 This is because, they go on to explain, “work with adequate pay for all who seek it is the primary means for achieving basic justice in our society.”50 Although lawmakers have put in place federal and state laws that prohibit and penalize racial discrimination in employment, it still is a practice that significantly distorts the distribution of wealth, opportunity, and privilege in society.51, 52, 53 A 2011 study found that the raw gap in earnings between white and black workers is close to 30 percent. When relevant factors are controlled for, including educational attainment, age, and occupation, the gap is still nearly 10 percent.54 This means that on average, a minority worker would earn only $45,000 in the same position in which a white worker in the same field with the same level of education and experience would earn $50,000. A significant body of field-based research also has found that employers engage in conscious and non-conscious processes that result in inequitable hiring and compensation.55 Denying minorities equal pay for equal work, whether consciously or not, is inherently unjust and undermines the dignity of minority workers, continuing centuries of injustice.

INDICATOR DATA

Minimum Indicator Value 1.3% gap in white-minority earnings (IA)
Maximum Indicator Value 21.0% gap in white-minority earnings (LA)
Average Indicator Value 8.6% gap in white-minority earnings (50 states and Washington, D.C.)

Gulf South States
AL 12.5% FL 8.8% LA21.0% MS 19.8% TX 13.9%

INDICATOR DATA

Minimum Indicator Value 1.4%  of public schools are segregated (HI)
Average Indicator Value 57.0% of public schools are segregated (Washington, D.C.)

Gulf South States
AL 24.1% FL 7.8% LA 22.1% MS 23.3% TX 9.0%

MINIMUM \[1.4\%\]  
MAXIMUM \[57.0\%\]  
US AVERAGE \[15.6\%\]  

MINIMUM \[1.3\%\]  
MAXIMUM \[21.0\%\]  
US AVERAGE \[8.8\%\]  

51.53.55.56
**Action Steps**

Enhanced enforcement of labor discrimination laws is critical to creating a culture in which overt or covert racial discrimination in the workplace is considered unacceptable. Many employers likely have not acknowledged the underlying psychological and cognitive processes that result in discriminatory compensation and promotion practices. Stereotyping based on race will continue to occur unless businesses and organizations take proactive steps to counter those tendencies that perpetuate race inequity.\(^{37}\)

Judiciously administered affirmative action programs in workplaces can contribute to ensuring that minorities have equal opportunity to obtain positions and compensation for which they are qualified. While some business leaders may make the effort to ensure that decisions about wages and promotions are not discriminatory, others will not act until government and legal entities have taken action against them. Accordingly, investigations by state inspectors and members of the media for wage and hour violations, enforcement of prevailing wage rates, and educational efforts for employers and employees are essential to closing the earnings gap between white and minority workers.

Despite initiatives to address wage inequities, disparities in earnings and job opportunities persist. Actions need to be taken to combat both overt and covert forms of racial discrimination in hiring and promotions. Court cases and federal prosecutions are needed to force companies to reform their practices. The U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission is increasingly active in investigating violations. State and local enforcement agencies and nonprofit legal service groups have helped to focus on employment discrimination. Businesses need to take active steps to ensure that decisions about wages and promotions are not discriminatory, and minority workers need legal assistance to hold them accountable.

Many employers likely have not acknowledged the underlying psychological and cognitive processes that result in discriminatory compensation and promotion practices. Stereotyping based on race will continue to occur unless businesses and organizations take proactive steps to counter those tendencies that perpetuate race inequity.\(^{37}\)

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Employment is a basic right that allows all citizens the freedom to participate in the economic life of society.\(^{18}\) Jobs enable workers to contribute to the common good and to meet their basic needs. The distribution of unemployment in the U.S. is skewed such that a significantly higher proportion of minority workers are unemployed than white workers. The cause of this disparity is multifaceted. Research indicates that differences in average educational attainment and job-preparedness between racial groups account for a portion of the unemployment gap.\(^{38}\) Studies also have documented the impact of racial discrimination in hiring practices.\(^{39}\) Taken together, minority workers and their families are at a significant disadvantage regarding employment and earning potential. As with wage laws, discrimination in hiring practices already is prohibited by federal and state laws, but violations of those laws can be difficult to prove.

Disproportionate levels of unemployment also are harmful to minority workers and families because unemployment negatively impacts one’s psychological and spiritual well-being. As noted by the U.S. Catholic Conference of Bishops in 1986: “The unemployed often come to feel they are worthless and without a productive role in society. Each day they are unemployed our society tells them: ‘We don’t need your talent. We don’t need your initiative. We don’t need you.’ As a result, those who suffer long periods of unemployment often have psychological damage that can have lasting effects on their well-being."\(^{41}\)

**INDICATOR DATA**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Minimum Indicator Value</th>
<th>Maximum Indicator Value</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No gap in white-minority unemployment rate (VT)</td>
<td>9.5% gap in white-minority unemployment rate (Washington, D.C.)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Average Indicator Value</td>
<td>4.1% gap in white-minority unemployment rate (50 states and Washington, D.C.)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Gulf South States**

| AL 6.8% | FL 3.1% | LA 5.8% | MS 6.1% | TX 2.5% |

**Action Steps**

Disparity in job preparation between racial groups and discriminatory practices in the workplace must be addressed in order to reduce the gap in unemployment rates between white and minority workers. Creating equal access to quality public education for minority children is vital to ensuring the same preparation for post-secondary education and employment as their white counterparts. The employment and earning potential of working-age persons who are minorities also can be improved through strategic investment. To close the unemployment gap among workers, states and communities should increase support for programs that offer vocational training, GED classes and tutoring, and other supports that help minorities increase their marketable skills and credentials.

Conscientious business leaders will make the effort to combat both overt and covert forms of racial discrimination in hiring and promotions. Employers need to take active steps to ensure that decisions about wages and promotions are not discriminatory, and minority workers need legal assistance to hold them accountable. Covert and overt racial discrimination in hiring and termination practices also must be addressed. A 2010 study found that black employees are significantly more likely than white employees to be laid off when companies need to downszie, indicating that state and federal enforcement agencies and nonprofit legal organizations must be vigilant in their efforts to protect workers and prosecute employers that engage in discriminatory hiring and firing practices.\(^{42}\) Voluntary affirmative action programs and recruitment activities by public and private employers that reach a broad and diverse audience also are critical to closing the employment gap for minorities.\(^{43}\)
Dimension 3
Immigrant Exclusion

Indicator 1
Rate of Disconnected Immigrant Youth

Disconnected youth are between 18 and 25 years old, not in school or working, and do not have a college degree. While youth of all races, ethnicities, and nationalities are at risk of becoming “disconnected,” immigrant youth are particularly susceptible to this plight. Immigrant youth face many stressors associated with migration to a new country, including discrimination, high rates of poverty, separation from family members, difficulty in language acquisition, and lack of cultural knowledge. Combined, the various challenges for immigrant youth can place them at high risk for dropping out of high school or college and unemployment. Immigrant youth also face barriers to accessing post-secondary education opportunities and legitimate employment opportunities due to immigration status. The individual and societal costs of disconnected immigrant youth are significant, as those youth are less likely to achieve self-sufficiency as they transition to adulthood. They also are more likely to have children and start a young family in poverty.

**Action Steps**
To decrease the rate of disconnected immigrant youth, communities must ensure that immigrant youth have both the academic opportunities and social supports needed to overcome obstacles associated with migrating to a new country. Through increasing resources to schools that teach English as a Second Language, or ESL, states and school districts can ensure that immigrant students overcome language barriers and receive their high school diplomas. For students who already have left the public education system, providing job-training programs and offering support services such as GED preparation programs, affordable child care, and community-based language instruction to immigrants can help bring disconnected youth back to the work force and on the path to self-sufficiency. In addition to skill-building, immigrant youth also need mentors who can help them navigate their challenging new circumstances. School and community-based mentoring programs can help disconnected youth overcome the psychological and emotional difficulties that result from immigrating to a foreign country.

**INDICATOR DATA**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>Minimum Indicator Value</th>
<th>Maximum Indicator Value</th>
<th>Average Indicator Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<tr>
<td>FL</td>
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<tr>
<td>LA</td>
<td>21.5%</td>
<td>34.8%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MS</td>
<td>16.4%</td>
<td>30.6%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TX</td>
<td>19.7%</td>
<td>41.7%</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Gulf South States
AL 11.6% FL 15.6% LA 21.5% MS 16.4% TX 19.7%

Indicator 2
Percent of Immigrants with Difficulty Speaking English

Most immigrants arrive in the U.S. with limited English skills but recognize the benefits of English proficiency and are highly motivated to learn. English language acquisition is beneficial to immigrants of all ages, including school-age children, working-age adults, and older immigrants. Providing immigrants the opportunity to learn English facilitates their integration into the local community, helping them become more economically productive and allowing them to participate more fully in society. Moreover, many immigrants have skills and training that could allow contribution to the economy through innovation and entrepreneurship, yet limited English proficiency often inhibits skilled immigrants from obtaining jobs commensurate with their competencies. Language acquisition also is important for young immigrants, as effective language programs increase the cognitive and social development of children and help them be better prepared to learn in school.

**Action Steps**
State and community leaders must effectively utilize federal, state, and local resources to develop and expand ESL programs to ensure that immigrants have the opportunity to become part of their new community, both socially and economically. In particular, funding family literacy programs that allow parents and children to participate in shared literacy activities is important because they provide the opportunity for parents to learn how to use English with their children during daily routines. Also, initiatives that combine work force development and language-learning programs put immigrants on a fast track to better social and economic outcomes. According to the true costs of providing quality language services to immigrant families. Additionally, state funding for school districts must adequately account for the extra resources required to teach students of limited English proficiency. For example, in Texas, schools districts that have experienced an influx of students with limited English proficiency have had difficulty providing effective services to students because the school finance system does not take into consideration the true costs of providing quality language services to immigrant children.

**INDICATOR DATA**

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<tr>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>Minimum Indicator Value</th>
<th>Maximum Indicator Value</th>
<th>Average Indicator Value</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AL</td>
<td>32.4%</td>
<td>45.0%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FL</td>
<td>32.3%</td>
<td>45.0%</td>
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<tr>
<td>LA</td>
<td>34.8%</td>
<td>45.0%</td>
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<tr>
<td>MS</td>
<td>30.6%</td>
<td>45.0%</td>
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<tr>
<td>TX</td>
<td>41.7%</td>
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<tr>
<td>VW</td>
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<td>45.0%</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Gulf South States
AL 32.4% FL 32.3% LA 34.8% MS 30.6% TX 41.7%
Indicator 3
Gap in Health Insurance Coverage Between Immigrant and Native-Born Populations

Immigrants, both legal and unauthorized, are less likely to have health insurance than native-born residents of the United States. As a result, many are forced to rely on a patchwork system of safety-net clinics and hospitals for free or reduced-price medical care or to pay out-of-pocket for health care services. As with the general population, lack of health care coverage for immigrants often leads to poor health outcomes, lost wages, and financial instability. The U.S. Catholic Conference of Bishops describes access to health care as a basic human right that should never be out of reach for individuals simply based on social or legal status.

The gap in health insurance rates between immigrant and native-born populations exists in both private and publicly provided coverage. Despite high rates of employment, significantly fewer immigrants have employer-sponsored health care than white employees, largely because insurance is less likely to be offered to them in the workplace. According to research by the Migration Policy Institute, job-based health insurance is offered to 87 percent of white citizen workers but only 50 percent of Hispanic workers. This gap persists even after controlling for job type, salary level, and other factors. Federal and state regulations also prevent many immigrants from enrolling in Medicaid and Medicare. Creating barriers to health insurance not only puts immigrants and their children at great risk but also weakens their ability to contribute to the common good. This is because immigrants’ lack of health insurance, like the poor, puts them at risk of absence from work, financial instability, long-term health complications, and early death.

INDICATOR DATA

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<tr>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>Minimum Indicator Value</th>
<th>Maximum Indicator Value</th>
<th>Average Indicator Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gap in health insurance rate</td>
<td>3.5% (VT)</td>
<td>32.3% (AK)</td>
<td>17.4% (50 states and Washington, D.C.)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Gulf South States

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Gap in health insurance rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AL</td>
<td>29.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FL</td>
<td>16.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LA</td>
<td>26.9%</td>
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<tr>
<td>MS</td>
<td>31.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TX</td>
<td>27.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Action Steps

Federal regulations generally prohibit immigrants from entering the Medicaid program unless they have been lawfully residing in the country for at least five years. Individual states, however, have flexibility to allow some immigrants to obtain public health insurance regardless of their date of entry or immigration status. For example, states have the option to use federal Children’s Health Insurance Program, or CHIP, funds to provide care to legally residing immigrant children and pregnant mothers without enforcing the five-year waiting period. In 2014, only 29 states and D.C. had chosen to utilize that option, with Texas being the only Gulf South state to do so. States also can extend public health insurance to immigrants regardless of their immigration status but must use state funds to cover the costs. For example, Illinois and Washington have state-funded children’s health insurance programs that provide coverage to all immigrant children who fall below a certain income threshold.

Employers also must take action to close the health insurance gap between the immigrant and native-born populations by offering health insurance on equivalent terms to all workers, as required by federal law. While a portion of the gap in private health insurance rates is attributable to immigrants working in industries that are less likely to offer health insurance, some is attributable to the practices of employers. Some businesses attempt to reduce costs by classifying immigrants as contract, temporary, or part-time workers to avoid offering benefits. Not only are these practices harmful to immigrant workers and families, but they also are not in the long-term interest of the employer because workers who have health insurance are more present, productive, and committed to their jobs.
Conclusion

The JustSouth Index and its underlying dimension indices represent areas in which people concerned about social justice must focus their attention to improve the standing of all persons in a state. Each individual indicator is actionable and connected to concrete policy and program recommendations. While the Gulf South states currently rank low in the Index, it is well within the power, and the duty, of leaders and citizens in those states to change the current reality. Improving a state’s ranking on the indicators, dimension indices, and the overall JustSouth Index is incumbent on policymakers, advocates, philanthropists, community leaders, and citizens taking action to work for policy and program changes that will more justly distribute opportunity and resources to all in society. In turn, they will serve the common good and create greater solidarity among residents of each state. Going forward, the JustSouth Index will continue to measure and report on the successes of efforts to improve social justice in the Gulf South states on an annual basis.

For more detailed data, methodology, and resources related to the JustSouth Index, please visit loy whole/index/JSRI or contact Jeanie Donovan at jdonova@loyno.edu.
Alaska INDEX 2016 March 2016

JESUIT SOCIAL RESEARCH INSTITUTE

JustSouth INDEX 2016

Alabama

JustSouth Index State Report Card

DIMENSION INDICES

Poverty 45
Alabama ranks 45 out of 51 in the Poverty Dimension, which reflects how little the state has invested in creating a safety net for its poorest residents. To improve family economic security, state leaders should consider raising the state’s minimum wage and expanding a state Earned Income Tax Credit. Further, expanding Medicaid eligibility to ensure that low-income Alaskans have access to health care is critical to improving well-being in the state. (Dimension Index Score: 48 out of 51)

Racial Disparity 46
Alabama ranks 46 out of 51 in the Racial Disparity Dimension, illustrating the immense amount of work to be done to increase racial equity in the state. State and local leaders must address racial disparities in education, employment, and wealth. By investing in high-quality schools, vocational training, and need-based financial aid for college, state officials can increase access to higher education for young people in the state. (Dimension Index Score: 50 out of 51)

Immigrant Exclusion 40
Alabama ranks 40 out of 51 in the Immigrant Exclusion Dimension, which is reflective of the hypothesis that states that have erected barriers to immigrants in the state. A large share of state law is scheduled to go into effect this year. (Dimension Index Score: 43 out of 51)

JUST SOUTH INDEX RANKING 48

2014 State Population by Race

Total Population: 4,869,377
- White: 66.2%
- Hispanic or Latinx: 4.1%
- Black or African American: 26.1%
- Other Race: 2.5%
- American Indian and Alaska Native: 0.1%

Individual Indicator Scores (0 to 1 Goalpost Scoring)

- Income of Poor Households: Below Goalpost
- Health Insurance Coverage for Poor: Below Goalpost
- Housing Affordability: Below Goalpost
- White-Minority Employment Equity: Below Goalpost
- Non-Segregation of Public Schools: Below Goalpost
- White-Minority Wage Equity: Below Goalpost
- Immigrant English Proficiency: Below Goalpost
- Immigrant Youth Outcomes: Below Goalpost
- Health Insurance Coverage for Immigrants: Below Goalpost

Poverty Dimension

Average Income of Poorest 25% of Households

- $11,379
- $15,281
- $20,996

Share of Poor Without Health Insurance: 28%

Racial Disparity Dimension

Nearly 1 in 4 Alabama public schools are segregated by race.

Gap in Unemployment Rates Between White and Minority Workers

- 11.7% Minority workers unemployed
- 4.9% White workers unemployed

Immigrant Exclusion Dimension

Only 59 percent of immigrants in Alabama have public or private health insurance coverage, compared to 89 percent of the native-born population.

SOURCES:
- U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2014
- National Center for Education Statistics, Elementary and Secondary Information System, 2010-2013
- See JustSouth index report, Indicators and Methodology sections for detailed description of analysis.
Florida

JustSouth Index State Report Card

DIMENSION INDICES

Poverty
Florida ranks 49 out of 51 in the Poverty Dimension because the state has an extremely high percentage of low-income Florida without health insurance and low-income households struggling to afford basic living expenses. The rate of people living in poverty in the state is 33%, which is significantly higher than the national average. (Dimension Index Score: 33 out of 100)

Racial Disparity
Florida ranks 14 out of 53 in the Racial Disparity Dimension, indicating that the state has made significant progress with regard to reducing racial disparity in schools and workplaces. As one of the most diverse states in the Gulf South, Florida has much to gain from continuing to promote racial equity for its residents by investing in schools serving a large and growing percentage of minority students. (Dimension Index Score: 72 out of 100)

Immigrant Exclusion
Florida ranks 29 out of 53 in the Immigrant Exclusion Dimension, largely due to the well-immigrated Latino immigrant population. 2018 state and local teachers must invest in efforts to increase English proficiency among immigrants, ensure that immigrant youth have access to the supports they need, and integrate them into the community. (Dimension Index Score: 57 out of 100)

JUST SOUTH INDEX RANKING

2014 State Population by Race

- Total Population: 19,893,297
- White: 55.6%
- Black or African American: 18.4%
- Hispanic or Latino: 34.1%
- Asian: 2.6%
- Two or more races: 2.6%

Individual Indicator Scores (0 to 1 Idealized Scoring)

- Income of Poor Households
- Health Insurance Coverage for Poor
- Housing Affordability
- White-Minority Employment Equity
- Non-Segregation of Public Schools
- White-Minority Wage Equity
- Immigrant English Proficiency
- Immigrant Youth Outcomes
- Health Insurance Coverage for Immigrants

Poverty Dimension

Average Income of Poorest 25% of Households:
- Florida: $12,960
- National Average: $15,201
- New Hampshire: $20,936

Share of Poor Without Health Insurance: 33%

Racial Disparity Dimension

8 percent of Florida public schools are segregated by race.

Gap in Unemployment Rates Between White and Minority Workers

- 8.0% Minority workers unemployed
- 4.9% White workers unemployed

Immigrant Exclusion Dimension

70 percent of immigrants in Florida have public or private health insurance coverage, compared to 87 percent of the native-born population.

32% of immigrants in Florida have difficulty speaking English

SOURCES:
- U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2018
- U.S. Bureau of Labor, Current Population Survey, 2018
- Florida Department of Health, Florida Health Information System, 2018-2019
- See the full JoySouth Index Report, Indicators, and Methodology sections for detailed description of analyses.
Louisiana

JustSouth Index State Report Card

DIMENSION INDICES

Poverty

Louisiana ranks 50 out of 51 in the Poverty Dimension, which is a reflection of state leaders’ unwillingness to increase the minimum wage, enhance the state’s Earned Income Tax Credit program, or to expand Medicaid eligibility to cover the poorest Louisianans. Additionally, housing and child care assistance programs may reach a fraction of those who need help due to low investment by the state. (Dimension Index Score: 32 out of 44)

Racial Disparity

Louisiana ranks 49 out of 51 in the Racial Disparity Dimension, which is attributed to the large gap in earnings between white and minority workers in similar occupations and high rates of unemployment for non-white job seekers. While Louisiana does have a state law barring employment discrimination based on race, the state must enhance its investigative and enforcement activities to ensure that all workers have equal opportunity to earn a living wage and to ensure that work is available in Louisiana is significantly higher than in other states. (Dimension Index Score: 44 out of 44)

Immigrant Exclusion

Louisiana ranks 48 out of 51 in the Immigrant Exclusion Dimension due the large gap in the health insurance rates of immigrants compared to native-born residents and a high rate of immigrant youth who are not attending school or working. Through increasing services for immigrant workers, families, and youth, state and local leaders can ensure that immigrants are able to successfully integrate into Louisiana communities. (Dimension Index Score: 40 out of 44)

JUST SOUTH INDEX RANKING

51

2014 State Population by Race

- Total Population: 4,666,676
- White: 59.7%
- Hispanic or Latinx: 4.6%
- Two or more races: 3.6%
- Asian: 1.9%
- American Indian or Alaska Native: 0.6%
- Black or African American: 12.3%

Individual Indicator Scores (0 to 1 Goalpost Scoring)

- Income of Poor Households
- Health Insurance Coverage for Poor
- Housing Affordability
- White-Minority Employment Equity
- Non-Segregation of Public Schools
- White-Minority Wage Equity
- Immigrant English Proficiency
- Immigrant Youth Outcomes
- Health Insurance Coverage for Immigrants

Poverty Dimension

Average Income of Poorest 25% of Households

- Louisiana: $11,156
- National Average: $15,281
- New Hampshire: $20,956

Share of Poor Without Health Insurance: 32%

Racial Disparity Dimension

More than 1 in 5 Louisiana public schools are segregated by race.

Gap in Unemployment Rates Between White and Minority Workers

- Minority workers unemployed: 10.0%
- White workers unemployed: 6.2%

79%

Immigrant Exclusion Dimension

Only 59 percent of immigrants in Louisiana have public or private health insurance coverage, compared to 86 percent of the native-born population.

35% of immigrants in Louisiana have difficulty speaking English

JustSouth INDEX 2016

March 2016
Mississippi

**JustSouth Index State Report Card**

### Poverty

51

Mississippi ranks last in the Poverty Dimension due to the extremely low average income for the poorest households and high rates of poor children without health insurance. State leaders have tried to expand Medicaid, increasing the minimum wage, and other efforts to address the inability to afford enough food to eat or a safe place to live. (Dimension Index Score: 50 out of 100)

### Racial Disparity

50

Mississippi ranks 50 out of 61 in the Racial Disparity Dimension, which assesses the 20 percent gap in earnings between white and minority workers in similar occupations and a share of segregated schools significantly higher than other states. Without explicitly addressing the severe racial disparities in Mississippi’s communities, schools, and workplaces, state and community leaders are not likely to achieve meaningful equality for a significant portion of the state’s population. (Dimension Index Score: 44 out of 100)

### Immigrant Exclusion

44

Mississippi ranks 44 out of 61 in the Immigrant Exclusion Dimension due to the high percentage of immigrants without health insurance and a large share of disconnected immigrant youth. Although only 2 percent of Mississippi’s immigrants are among the growing segment of low-income, the state has much to gain economically and socially from ensuring that those immigrants are able to integrate in the communities in which they settle through language acquisition, quality education, and access to health care. (Dimension Index Score: 44 out of 100)

**Just South Index Ranking**

50

**2014 State Population by Race**

- Total Population: 2,944,079
- White: 57.3%
- Hispanic or Latino: 5.8%
- Black or African American: 37.5%
- Two or more Races: 1.2%
- Asian: 1.0%
- American Indian Alaska Native: 0.6%

**Individual Indicator Scores**

- Income of Poor Households
- Health Insurance Coverage for Poor
- Housing Affordability
- Employment Equity
- Non-Segregation of Public Schools
- White-Minority Wage Equity
- Immigrant English Proficiency
- Immigrant Youth Outcomes
- Health Insurance Coverage for Immigrants

**Racial Disparity Dimension**

Nearly 25 percent of Mississippi public schools are segregated by race.

**Poverty Dimension**

- Average income of poorest 25% of households:
  - Mississippi: $9,091
  - National Average: $15,201
  - New Hampshire: $26,596

**Immigrant Exclusion Dimension**

- Only 56% of immigrants in Mississippi have public or private health insurance coverage, compared to 86 percent of the native-born population.

**Gap in Unemployment Rates Between White and Minority Workers**

- Minority workers unemployed: 11.4%
- White workers unemployed: 5.3%
- Minority workers’ earnings compared to white workers’ earnings with similar experience and occupations.

**Immigrant Engagement**

- 31% of immigrants in Mississippi have difficulty speaking English.

**JustSouth INDEX 2016** March 2016

**Sources:**
- U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2014
- National Center for Education Statistics, Elementary and Secondary Information System, 2010-2013
- See full JustSouth Index Report, Indicators and Methodology sections, for detailed description of analyses.
Texas

**JustSouth Index State Report Card**

**DIMENSION INDICES**

**Poverty**

Texas ranks 46th out of 50 in the Poverty Dimension. Although the state has a robust economy with low unemployment, it also has a high proportion of low-wage jobs and a low state minimum wage law. Texas also has one of the weakest safety nets for families due to state legislation. Reducing it to expand Medicaid, shrinking the TANF cash assistance program, and relatively low state investment in housing and child care assistance programs.

[Dimension Index Score: 46 out of 100]

**Racial Disparity**

Texas ranks 25th in the Racial Disparity Dimension, illustrating the gaps in opportunity and progress between racial and ethnic groups in the state. Although Black and groups have higher rates of unemployment, the share is far less than their white counterparts in similar occupations. Through increasing investments in schools serving minority students and ensuring that all students are paid fairly, states and local leaders can increase equity and improve economic outcomes for minority families.

[Dimension Index Score: 25 out of 100]

**Immigrant Exclusion**

Texas ranks 49th out of 50 in the Immigrant Exclusion Dimension. Illustrating the depth of support available to the vast number of immigrants in the state, English proficiency rates lag behind comparable states, and the number of immigrant youth who are not working or attending school reflects the lack of investment in education for immigrant students and inclusion efforts.

[Dimension Index Score: 49 out of 100]

**JUST SOUTH INDEX RANKING**

49

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**Poverty Dimension**

Average Income of Poorest 25% of Households

- Texas: $14,776
- National Average: $15,281
- New Hampshire: $20,906

Share of Poor Without Health Insurance: 36%

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**Racial Disparity Dimension**

Texas has a lower rate of school segregation than the national average, but 9 percent of Texas public schools still are segregated by race.

**Gap in Unemployment Rates Between White and Minority Workers**

- Minority workers unemployed: 6.2%
- White workers unemployed: 3.7%

When controlling for age, education level, and occupation, minority workers in Texas earn 86 percent of what their white counterparts earn.

Minority workers’ earnings compared to white workers’ earnings with similar experience and occupations. 86%

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**Immigrant Exclusion Dimension**

Only 58 percent of immigrants in Texas have public or private health insurance coverage, compared to 86 percent of the native-born population. 42% of immigrants in Texas have difficulty speaking English.

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**B Licenses:**

- U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2014
- U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Common Core State Student and Teacher Data Longitudinal Database.
- Southern Poverty Law Center, Southern Poverty Law Center, 2013-2015

See full JustSouth Index Report, indicators and methodology sections, for detailed description of analyses.


Ibid.


More maps and index data available at loy.edu/jsri/indicators-map

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