

Methodology

Overall county rankings are based on a scale containing five indicators of child well-being: low weight births, births to unmarried teens, children in single-parent families, children in poverty, and the high school graduation rate. These five factors were selected from a larger pool of variables based on the degree of inner-correlation among the variables and other considerations. The reliability coefficient of the resulting scale, as measured by Chronbach's Alpha, is .810. All measures were given the same weight in calculating the overall score. Thus, no attempt was made to assess the relative importance of each of the individual indicators.

The overall rank for each county was obtained through using the following procedure:

First, the numerical values for all five variables were converted into standard scores. Standard scores are derived through subtracting the mean score from the observed score and dividing by the standard deviation for that distribution of scores.

Next, the standard scores were summed in order to create a total standard score for each county.

Finally, the state's 67 counties were ranked on the basis of their total standard score from the lowest/best (1) to highest/worst (67).

The scale used this year for the overall ranking of counties varies slightly from that used last year. Prior to the *2002 Data Book*, furthermore, a variety of different scales were used, none of which compare directly with the scale used this year. For that reason, comparisons between this year's rank for a given county and those from previous years, especially prior to 2002, should be made with caution.

| COUNTY | TOTAL SCORE |
|------------|-------------|
| Shelby | -9.301 |
| Blount | -5.914 |
| Cleburne | -5.228 |
| St. Clair | -4.700 |
| Limestone | -4.678 |
| Baldwin | -4.333 |
| Cullman | -4.265 |
| Lee | -4.118 |
| Madison | -3.912 |
| Winston | -3.829 |
| Elmore | -3.773 |
| Coffee | -3.524 |
| Fayette | -3.477 |
| Marion | -3.460 |
| Autauga | -3.447 |
| Franklin | -3.362 |
| Lamar | -3.347 |
| Marshall | -3.064 |
| Morgan | -3.038 |
| Washington | -2.982 |
| Walker | -2.822 |
| DeKalb | -2.803 |
| Cherokee | -2.762 |
| Dale | -2.695 |
| Lawrence | -2.442 |
| Chilton | -2.410 |
| Jackson | -2.290 |
| Lauderdale | -2.243 |
| Calhoun | -1.924 |
| Houston | -1.901 |
| Colbert | -1.611 |
| Geneva | -1.427 |
| Crenshaw | -1.186 |
| Henry | -1.010 |
| Etowah | -1.005 |
| Covington | -0.704 |
| Clay | -0.663 |
| Jefferson | -0.063 |
| Tuscaloosa | 0.117 |
| Bibb | 0.546 |
| Randolph | 0.824 |
| Marengo | 1.288 |
| Coosa | 1.296 |
| Tallapoosa | 1.621 |
| Pickens | 1.662 |
| Escambia | 1.799 |
| Choctaw | 1.985 |
| Monroe | 2.234 |
| Pike | 2.268 |
| Clarke | 2.558 |
| Mobile | 2.671 |
| Talladega | 3.004 |
| Butler | 3.323 |
| Russell | 3.452 |
| Chambers | 3.891 |
| Hale | 4.577 |
| Montgomery | 4.724 |
| Conecuh | 5.496 |
| Barbour | 5.739 |
| Sumter | 5.886 |
| Macon | 5.907 |
| Wilcox | 6.132 |
| Perry | 6.973 |
| Greene | 7.226 |
| Bullock | 7.302 |
| Dallas | 9.949 |
| Lowndes | 11.263 |

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