

Family and Home Environment



**Where children are concerned
all households are not created equal.**

There are two realities for children born in Shelby County. Some children grow up in families with both parents present. One or both parents work, the family has enough income to thrive, and the community is supportive and safe. Other children grow up in families with only one parent present. Changing residences and schools frequently is the norm. The family is likely to be in poverty, and the parent is likely to face high barriers to earning an adequate income. Crime is ever-present, and neighborhoods are unsafe.

We know that not all children have access to the same early environments and experiences. Many children in our community grow up in fractured families that are made vulnerable by poverty. Parents with low levels of education, especially those who have not completed high school, have higher barriers to steady employment than do better-educated parents. As a result, they are more likely to confront poverty and to rely on public assistance to supplement their family incomes. Parents' education levels also correlate closely with

children's academic success and overall well-being.

Research shows consistently that the well-being of children is affected primarily by family income, family structure and parents' education level.

Children fare best when:

- They are raised in stable families with both parents present (McLanahan & Sandefur, 1994; Parcel & Dufur, 2001).
- Parents are educated (Child Trends, 2004) and have a steady income that adequately meets the needs of the entire family (Menaghan & Parcel, 1991; Taylor, Dearing, & McCartney, 2004).
- Their families have access to health care (Dubay & Kenney, 2001).
- They live in communities that are safe, and where neighbors value and respect each other (Coulton & Korbin, 2007; Vandivere *et al.*, 2006).

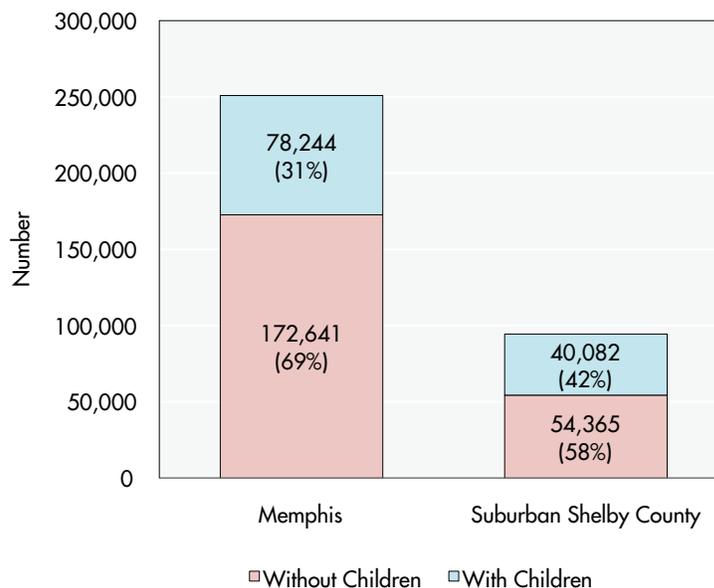
Families with children are a shrinking minority.

In 1956 a majority of U.S. households included children under 18. Parental involvement with school and community programs, such as parent-teacher organizations, was at an all-time high (Putnam, 2000). In 2007 only one in three of the more than 100 million households in the U.S. included a child under 18. In too many households without children, out-of-sight means out-of-mind. Adults who have infrequent contact with children are less likely to place a priority on the

well-being of children (Imig, 2006). As the numbers of households with children in our community decline it is difficult to maintain an effective public voice for children.

Consistent with national trends, only one in three households in Memphis and Shelby County has children under 18 present. The proportion is slightly higher (two in five) in suburban Shelby County (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Number and Percentage of Households by Presence of Children, Memphis & Suburban Shelby County, 2007



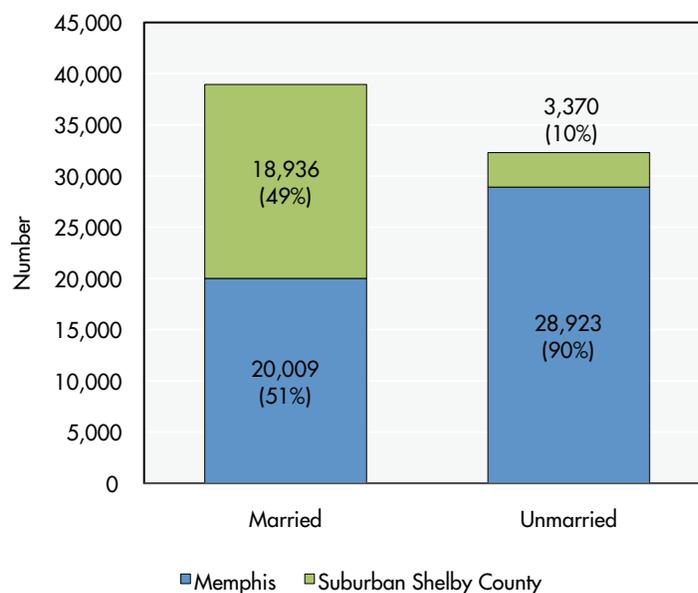
Source: American Community Survey, 2007, C11005

In Shelby County, 90 percent of very young children in single parent homes live in Memphis.

Children in suburban Shelby County are much more likely than children in Memphis to live with two parents. 55 percent of very young children (under six years) in Shelby County live with two married parents. Roughly half of these children

live in the City of Memphis, and half live in suburban Shelby County. However, among children being raised by single parent families in Shelby County, nine out of ten live in Memphis (Figure 2).

Figure 2: Number and Percentage of Children Under 6 Years by Family Type, Memphis & Suburban Shelby County, 2007



Source: American Community Survey, 2007, B0900

In 2007, one-third of children in Shelby County were younger than six, one-third were between six and 11, and one-third were between 12 and 17 (Figure 3). Across Shelby County children were more likely to live with married parents (55%) than with a single parent (45%). However, there

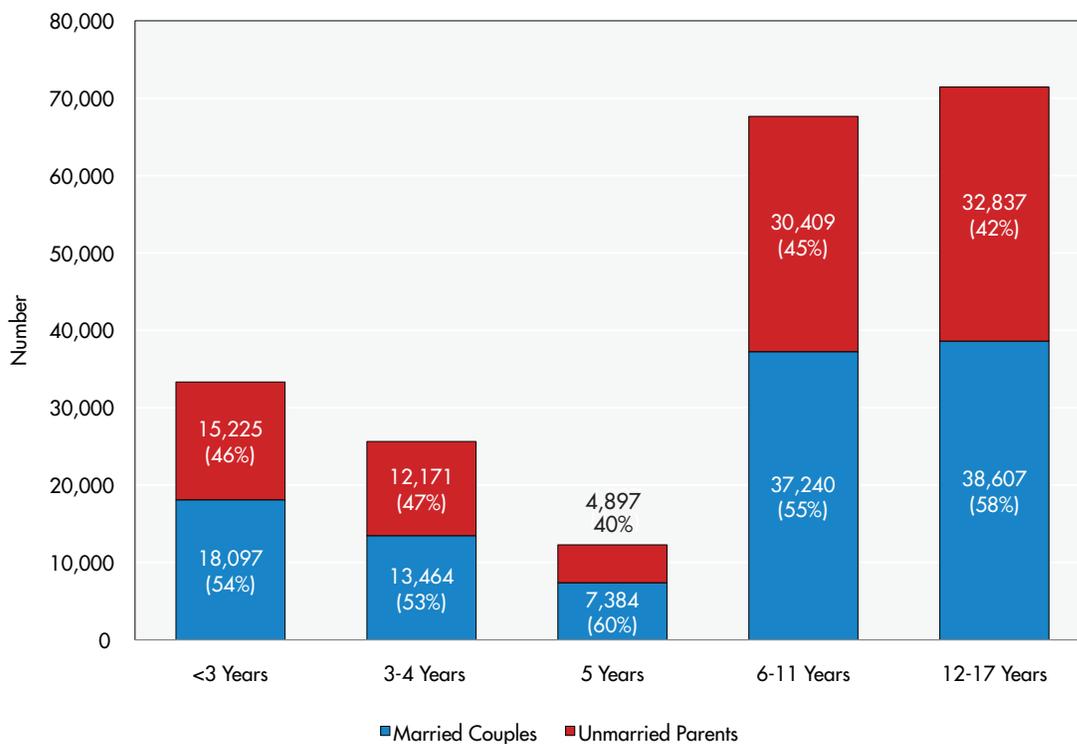
are important differences between Memphis and suburban Shelby County. Only 40 percent of Memphis children live with married parents, compared to 82 percent of children in suburban Shelby County.

What happens in early childhood sets the stage for a child's life.

Living arrangements affect the cognitive, social, emotional, physical and intellectual development of very young children. As children grow and develop, they benefit from the continued support and presence of two or more caring, stable adults in their lives. “[G]rowing up with only one biologi-

cal parent frequently deprives children of important economic, parental, and community resources, and...these deprivations ultimately undermine their chances of future success” (McLanahan & Sandefur, 1994, p. 3).

Figure 3: Number and Percentage of Children by Living Arrangement and Age, Shelby County, 2007



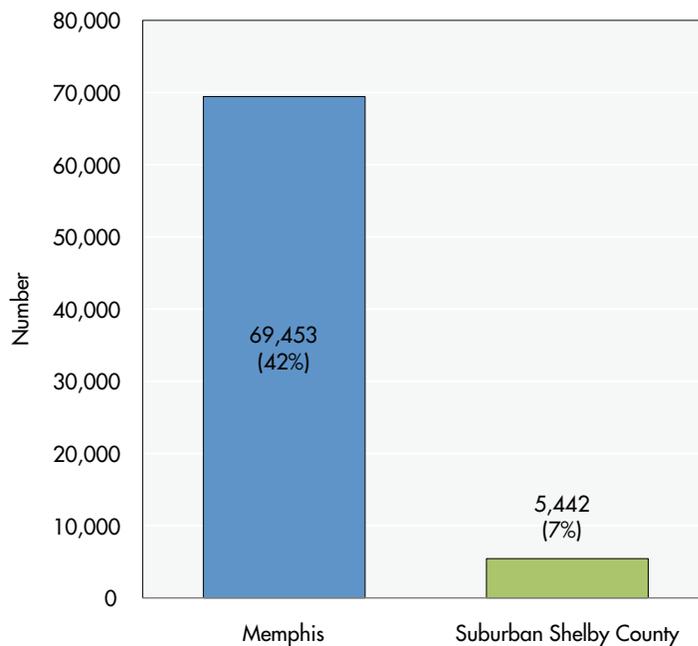
Source: American Community Survey, 2007, B09002

Across Shelby County one in four children lived in poverty in 2007.

For children, being poor means more than economic deprivation. Careful research demonstrates that poverty negatively affects intellectual and behavioral development. Poor children receive less cognitive stimulation at home than middle income children, and the stressors associated with poverty hinder parents' ability to engage in effective parenting (Guo & Harris, 2000).

In the City of Memphis more than one out of three (69,453) children lived in poverty, as defined by the Federal Poverty Level (FPL). In Shelby County outside of Memphis fewer than one ten (7,174) children lived in poverty (Figure 4). FPL for a family of four is \$20,650 per year.

Figure 4: Number and Percentage of Children in Poverty, Memphis & Suburban Shelby County, 2007



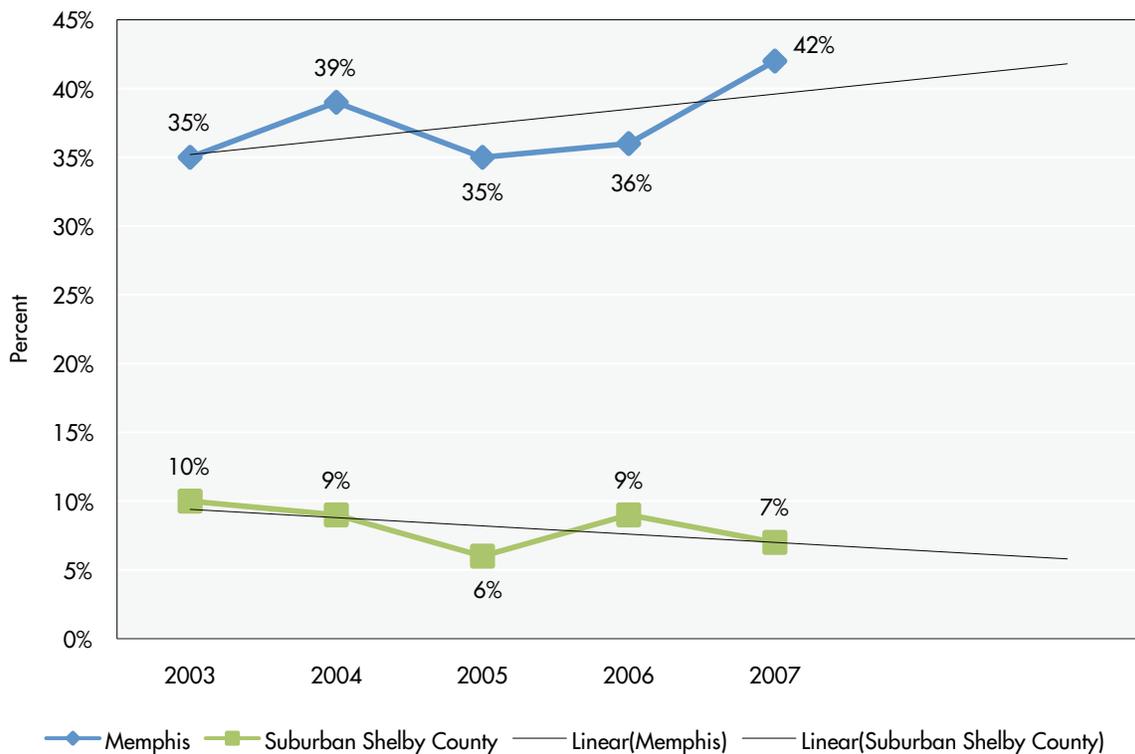
Source: American Community Survey, 2007, C17001

Poverty is on the rise in Memphis.

While poverty appears to be declining in suburban Shelby County, it is on the rise in Memphis. Between 2003 and 2007, the percentage of chil-

dren in poverty dropped from ten percent to seven percent beyond the city limits while in Memphis it rose from 35 to 42 percent (Figure 5).

Figure 5: Percentage of Children in Poverty, Memphis & Suburban Shelby County, 2003-2007



Source: American Community Survey, 2003-2007, C17001

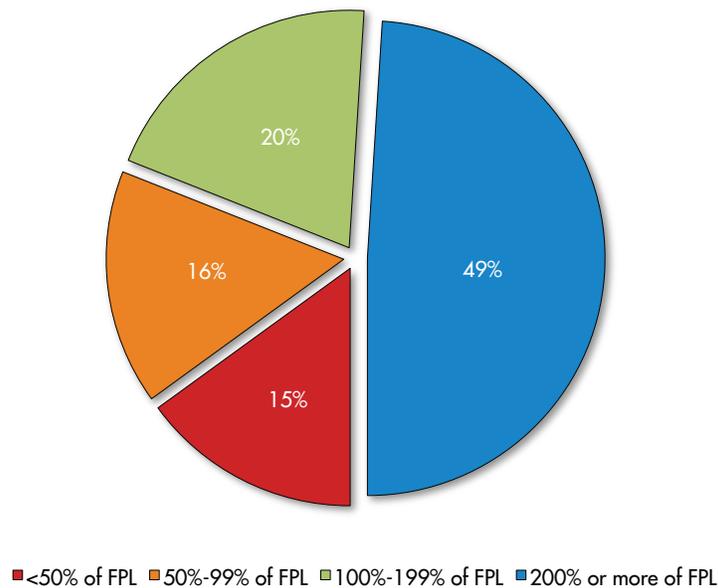
The Federal Poverty Level paints an incomplete picture of children living in poor families.

Critics of the FPL claim that it does not accurately reflect the impact of household expenses such as child care and out-of-pocket medical payments. Research undertaken by the U.S. Census Bureau shows that an improved measure of poverty would show a larger proportion of working parents and married families living in poverty. "Overall, full-time working families fare less well according to the experimental measures than the official poverty rate suggests" (Iceland, 2000, p. 6). Because of these limitations, researchers often find it helpful to consider two additional groups: those living in

extreme poverty (below 50% of FPL) and those who are considered low income (between 100 and 200% of FPL).

In 2007, one in five Shelby County children lived in low income families. About 30 percent lived in poverty, with half of these living in extreme poverty (roughly \$10,000 in annual income for a family of four). Only half of Shelby County children lived in families above the low income threshold (Figure 6). These families are generally regarded as economically secure.

Figure 6: Percentage of Children by Living Standard, Shelby County, 2007



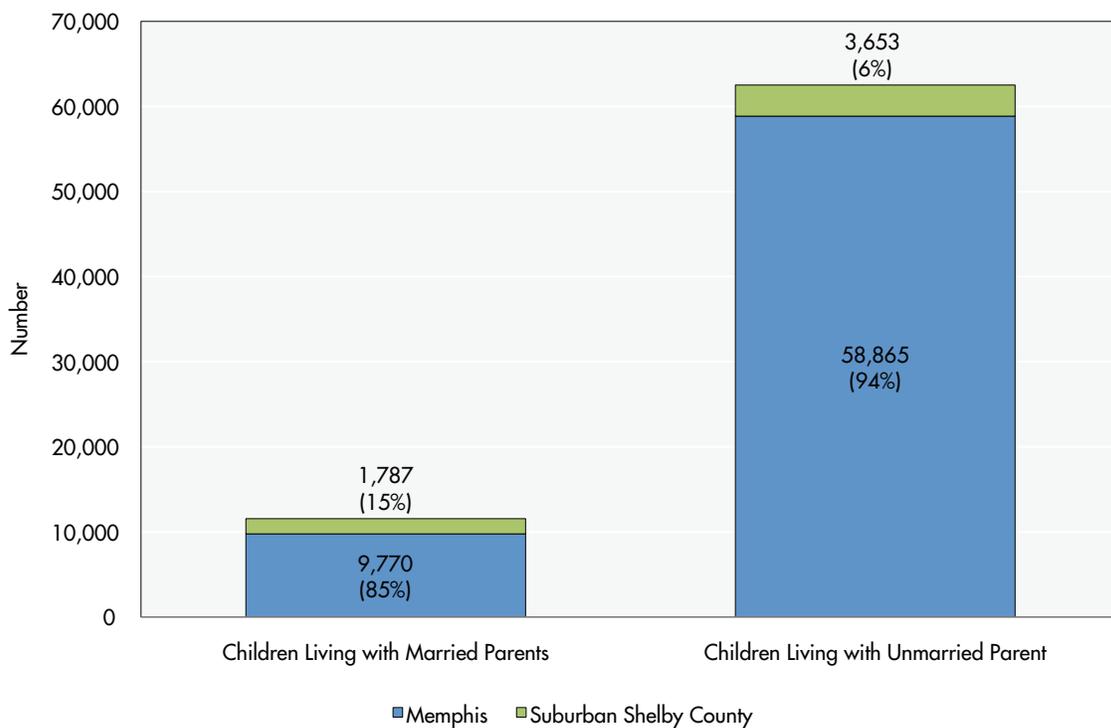
Source: American Community Survey, 2007, B17024

Children in two-parent families are much less likely to live in poverty.

Economically, single parent and two-parent families are very different. Of the nearly 75,000 children in Memphis and Shelby County living in poverty, only 16 percent lived with married parents (Figure 7). Children of single parents not only face economic disadvantage, but also perform less well than children of married parents on cognitive and behavioral measures (Carlson & Corcoran, 2001) and have lower chances of educational success (Raley, Frisco, & Wildsmith, 2005).

Research suggests that 40-50 percent of single mothers are cohabiting at the time of their child's birth (Bumpass & Lu, 2000; Sigle-Rushton & McLanahan, 2002). While these households may have the advantage of two potential incomes, outcomes for children in cohabiting families are more similar to those of children of single parents than to those of children in married families (Brown, 2002; Osborne, 2007).

Figure 7: Number and Percentage of Children in Poverty by Living Arrangement, Memphis & Suburban Shelby County, 2007



Source: American Community Survey, 2007, C17006

Family income is a good measure of child well-being.

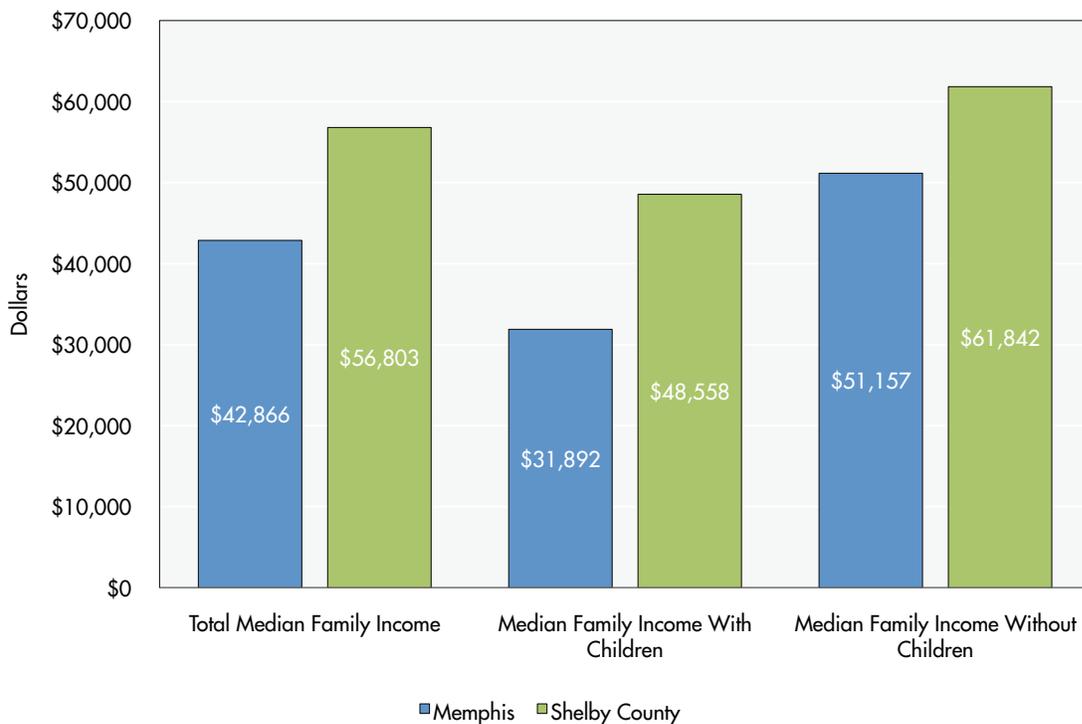
Families with sufficient incomes have more resources available for child care, transportation, health care, and other components of a stable environment for children. Too often, children raised in low-income and poor families lack access to these resources. In addition, poor children are exposed to a smaller vocabulary at home and are less likely to spend time reading with their parents and caregivers. By the time they reach school, they are at a disadvantage, which translates into greater numbers of academic and behavioral prob-

lems (Ginther & Pollack, 2004; Lee & Burkham, 2002; Thomson, *et al.*, 1994).

In 2007, median income for families with children in the City of Memphis was \$31,892 per year. A family of four including two children needed to earn about \$42,000 to be considered above low income (200% of FPL) (Figure 8).

Across Shelby County, median income for families with children was \$48,558 per year (Figure 8).

Figure 8: Median Family Income by Presence of Children, Memphis & Shelby County, 2007



Source: American Community Survey, 2007, B19125

Most Shelby County families do not have a financial “safety net.”

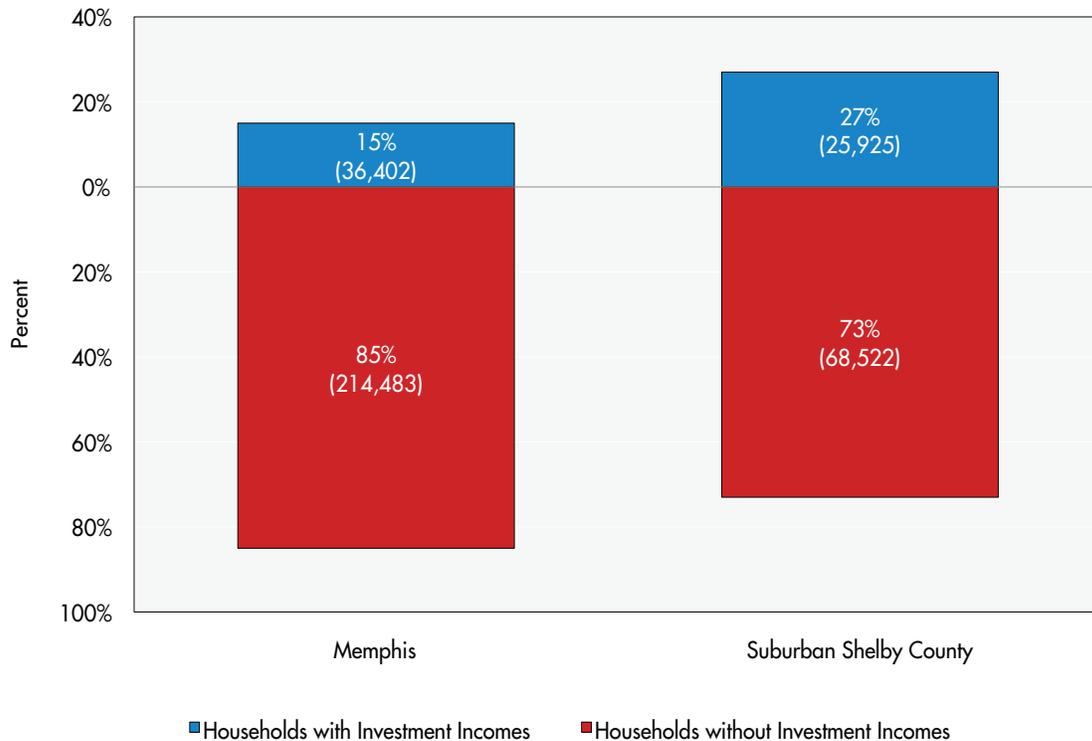
Less than 20 percent of Shelby County families have income other than earnings—for example, interest from savings or bonds, dividends from stocks, or income from rental property. This type of income is a good measure of a family’s financial safety net—assets that allow a family to withstand fluctuations in the economy, temporary unemployment, unforeseen medical expenses, and other setbacks.

In Memphis, only 15 percent of families report some investment income; in suburban Shelby County, 27 percent had some investment income.

75 percent of Shelby County families without a safety net lived in Memphis (Figure 9).

Low rates of savings in Memphis and Shelby County also highlight other community problems, such as the reliance on check-cashing agencies instead of banks. Using a bank to manage family income helps to establish a credit record which, in turn, makes it easier to secure credit and purchase a home. In the wake of the sub-prime mortgage lending crisis, a strong credit history is more critical than ever for working families.

Figure 9: Number and Percentage of Households by Presence of Investment Income, Memphis & Suburban Shelby County, 2007



Source: American Community Survey, 2007, B19054

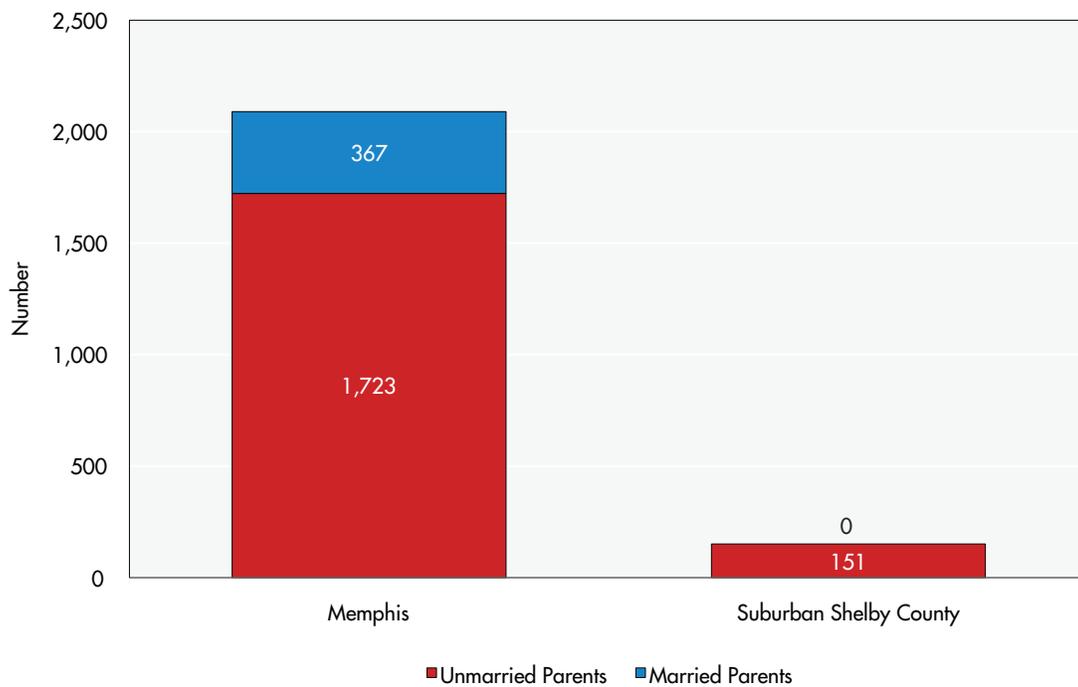
Public assistance is vital for poor children and their families.

Economically vulnerable families in Shelby County rely on government subsidies to make ends meet, and single parents raising children comprise the bulk of public assistance recipients in our community. However, public assistance is at best only a temporary solution for poor families; Families First, Tennessee's version of the Federal

Temporary Assistance for Needy Families program, allows a lifetime total of 60 months of benefits for those who are eligible (TN DHS, 2008).

Corresponding to the distribution of poor families, the majority of public assistance recipients in Shelby County live in Memphis (Figure 10).

Figure 10: Number of Families in Poverty with Supplemental Security Income and/or Cash Assistance by Family Type, Memphis & Suburban Shelby County, 2007



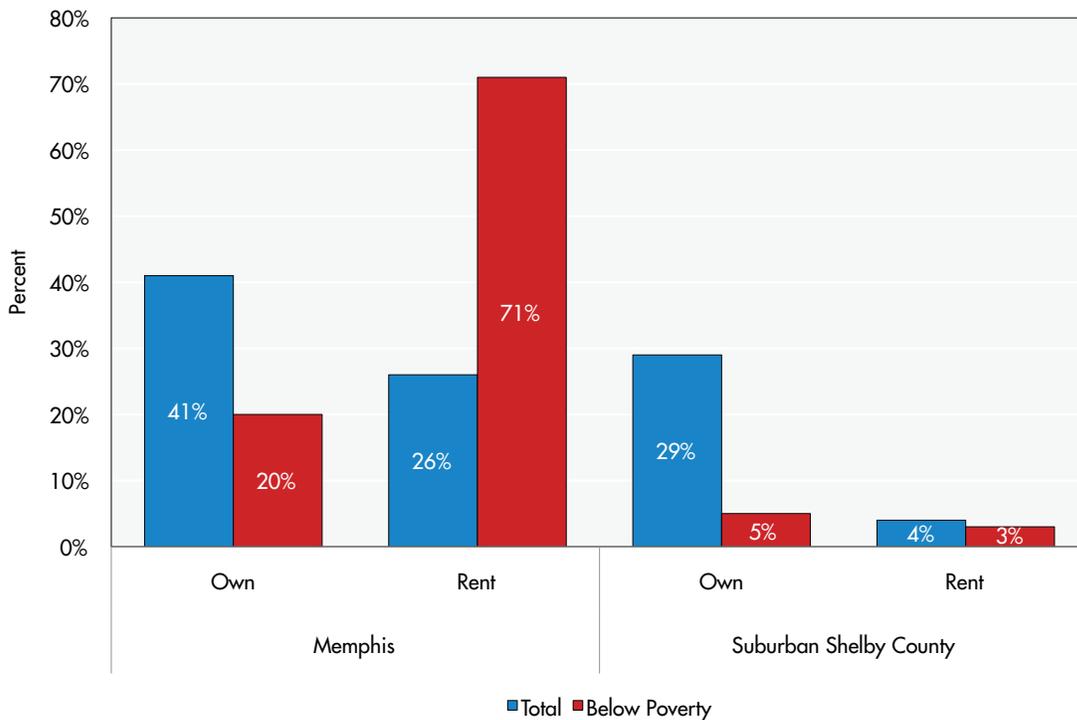
Source: American Community Survey, 2007, B17015

Family and child well-being are affected by housing instability.

Across Shelby County, over two-thirds of families own their homes. Among families in poverty, only one in four owns its home (Figure 11). In Memphis and Shelby County, housing status is an indicator of residential stability, which in turn affects child outcomes. Children being raised by single parents may be affected more negatively by family mobility than those who live with both parents (Tucker, Marx, & Long, 1998).

High rates of mobility make it difficult for families and neighborhoods to build social capital (McLanahan & Sandefur, 1994). When children change schools often, their chances of academic success are lowered (Hofferth, Boisjoly, & Duncan, 1998), and residential mobility may account for a large part (roughly 20-30%) of the difference in educational outcomes between children in traditional families and those in single parent families or step-families (Astone & McLanahan, 1994).

Figure 11: Percentage of Households in Poverty by Tenure, Memphis & Suburban Shelby County, 2007



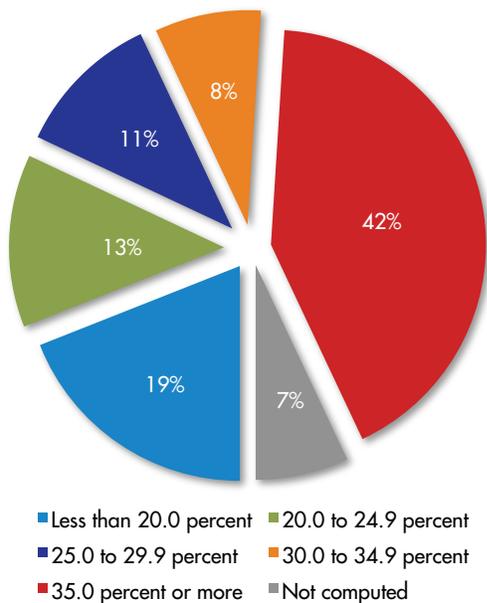
Source: American Community Survey, 2007, B17019

Memphis families are more likely than Shelby County families to rent their homes.

In Memphis, almost 40 percent of families rent, compared to 12 percent in suburban Shelby County, and this pattern is reflected in Memphis schools. In Memphis City Schools the average stability rate is about 70, meaning that 30 percent of students do not finish the school year in the same school in which they started. In 58 schools, one-third of all students changed schools at least once during the 2007-2008 school year (MCS, 2008). Changing schools has been linked to lower academic performance and increased risk of dropping out (Pribesh & Downey, 1999; Rumberger & Larson, 1998).

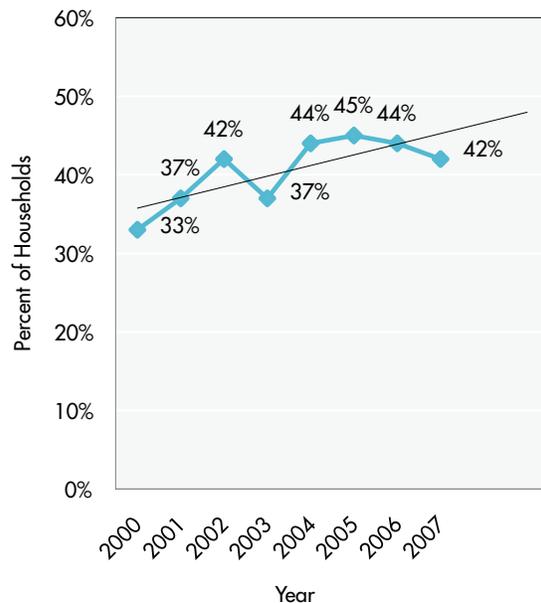
According to federal guidelines, a typical family will spend no more than 30 percent of its income on rent (Citro & Michael, 1995). In spite of the fact that Shelby County is one of the least expensive housing markets in the U.S., half of families in Shelby County who rent their homes spend 30 percent or more of their income on rent (Figure 12). Median rent in Shelby County in 2007 was \$743 per month. Moreover, the percentage of families that spend more than 35 percent of their income on rent has risen since 2000 (Figure 13).

Figure 12: Percentage of Household Income Spent on Rent, Shelby County, 2007



Source: American Community Survey, 2007, B25070

Figure 13: Percentage of Households who Spent 35 Percent or More of Their Gross Income on Rent, Shelby County, 2007



Source: American Community Survey, 2000-2007, B25070

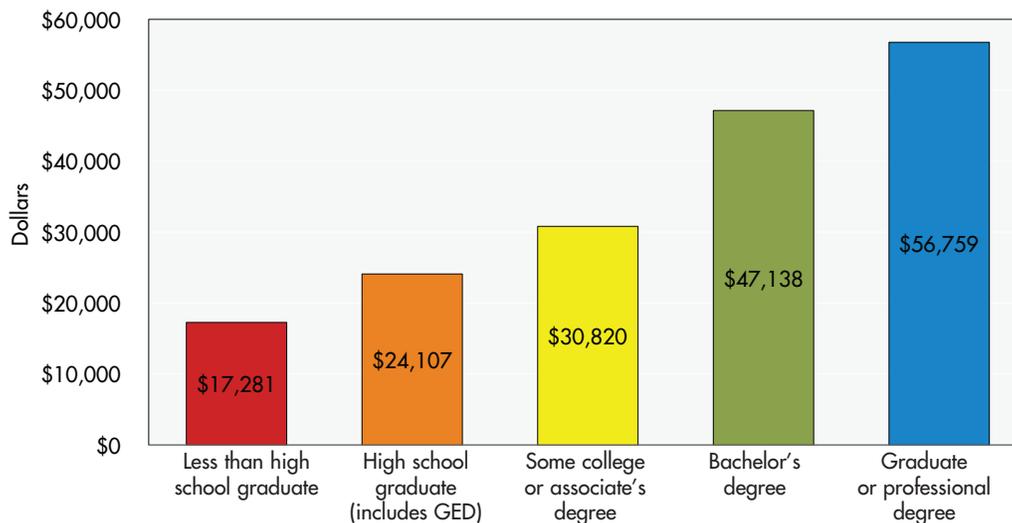
Education can mean the difference between poverty and success.

More education means more income. Nationally, high school graduates earn 40 percent more than non-graduates. Attending college raises income further, even for those who do not graduate, and the income gap between Americans with a college degree and those with only a high school diploma has been growing in recent decades (Day & Newburger, 2002). Shelby County parents without a high school education earn near-poverty wages, while workers with high school diplomas earn above the poverty level. Median income for workers without a diploma was just over \$17,000 (Figure 14); the poverty level for a family of four is \$21,027.

In Memphis, earnings are slightly lower; median income for those without diplomas is \$16,987. A single parent without a diploma raising two children will earn just over the poverty level for a family of three (\$16,705).

In Shelby County, the return on education is higher than the national average. High school graduates who attend some college increase their earnings by 28 percent; for those who earn a bachelor's degree the increase is 96 percent (Figure 14). The national averages are 22 percent and 74 percent, respectively.

Figure 14: Median Annual Income by Educational Attainment, Shelby County, 2007



Source: American Community Survey, 2007, B20004

Aside from raising annual income, education can have far-reaching advantages.

Education has multiple benefits. Women's risk of a nonmarital birth decreases as educational attainment and income increase (Driscoll *et al.*, 1999; Upchurch, Lillard, & Panis, 2002). Furthermore, a mother's educational attainment is a good predictor of a child's overall life outcomes and success (Baydar, Brooks-Gunn, & Furstenberg, 1993; Duncan & Magnuson, 2005).

Research has shown that mothers with more education and more complex and rewarding work are able to provide a more stimulating home environment than other working mothers (Menaghan & Parcel, 1991). For example, better-educated mothers are more likely to read to their children every day (Child Trends, 2008).

Early childhood interventions benefit multiple generations.

What happens in the first years of life is critically important to subsequent outcomes for children. Our community can have a powerful positive influence by investing in early childhood interventions that have demonstrated success in improving the well-being of young children and their families. Best practices and proven interventions that reduce the effects of family and community poverty show tremendous results when implemented and fully funded. These programs raise test scores (Gormley, Gayer, Phillips, & Duncan, 2005), help deter crime (Olds *et al.*, 1998), and encourage at-risk children to stay in school (Barnett, 1985) and delay parenthood (Allen, Philliber, Herrling, & Kuperminc, 1997).

- Children benefit directly from quality learning experiences.
- Parents benefit by being able to work with the peace of mind that their children are receiving quality child care in a healthy learning environment.
- Future generations benefit when we intervene early to break the cycle of poverty, setting young children on a pathway to success in school and in life.

References

- Allen, J.P., Philliber, S., Herrling, S., & Kuperminc, G.P. (1997). Preventing teen pregnancy and academic failure: Experimental evaluation of a developmentally based approach. *Child Development*, 68(4), 729-742.
- Astone, N.M., & McLanahan, S.S. (1994). Family structure, residential mobility, and school dropout. *Demography*, 31(4), 575-584.
- Barnett, S.W. (1985). Benefit-cost analysis of the Perry Preschool Program and its policy implications. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 7(4), 333-342.
- Baydar, N., Brooks-Gunn, J., & Furstenberg, F.F. (1993). Early warning signs of functional illiteracy: Predictors in childhood and adolescence. *Child Development*, 64(3), 815-824.
- Brown, S.L. (2002). Child well-being in cohabiting families. In Alan Booth & Ann C. Crouter (Eds.) *Just Living Together: Implications of Cohabitation on Families, Children and Social Policy*. Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Bumpass, L., & Lu, H.H. (2000). Trends in cohabitation and implications for children's family contexts in the United States. *Population Studies*, 54(1), 29-41.
- Carlson, M.J., & Corcoran, M.E. (2001). Family structure and children's behavioral and cognitive outcomes. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 63, 779-793.
- Child Trends & Center for Child Health Research. (2004). Early childhood development in social context: A chartbook. Retrieved January 28, 2008, from http://www.commonwealthfund.org/usr_doc/ChildDevChartbk.pdf?section=4039
- Child Trends Databank. (2008). Reading to young children. Retrieved January 28, 2008, from <http://www.childtrends.databank.org/indicators/5ReadingtoYoungChildren.cfm>
- Citro, C.F., & Michael, R.T. (1995). *Measuring Poverty: A New Approach*. Washington, DC: National Academy Press.
- Coulton, C. J., & Korbin, J.E. (2007). Indicators of child well-being through a neighborhood lens. *Social Indicators Research*, 84(3), 349-361.
- Day, J.C., & Newburger, E.C. (2002). The big payoff: Educational attainment and synthetic estimates of work-life earnings. U.S. Census Bureau. Retrieved February 4, 2008, from <http://www.census.gov/prod/2002pubs/p23-210.pdf>
- Driscoll, A.K., Hearn, G.K., Evans V.J., Moore, K.A., Sugland, B.W., & Call, V. (1999). Nonmarital childbearing among adult women. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 61(1), 178-187.
- Dubay, L., & Kenney, G.M. (2001). Health care access and use among low-income children: Who fares best? *Health Affairs*, 20(1), 112-121.
- Duncan, G.J., & Magnuson, K.A. (2005). Can family socioeconomic resources account for racial and ethnic test score gaps? *The Future of Children*, 15(1), 35-54.
- Ginther, D.K., & Pollack, R.A. (2004). Family structure and children's educational outcomes: Blended families, stylized facts, and descriptive regressions. *Demography*, 41(4), 671-696.
- Gormley, W.T.Jr, Gayer, T., Phillips, D., & Dawson, B. (2005). The effects of universal pre-K on cognitive development. *Developmental Psychology*, 41(6), 872-884.

References, continued

- Guo, G., & Harris, K.M. (2000). The mechanisms mediating the effects of poverty on children's intellectual development. *Demography*, 37(4), 431-447.
- Hofferth, S.L., Boisjoly, J., & Duncan, G.J. (1998). Parents' extrafamilial resources and children's school attainment. *Sociology of Education*, 71(3), 246-268.
- Iceland, J. (2000). Poverty among working families: Findings from experimental poverty measures. U.S. Census Bureau Special Study. Retrieved February 3, 2009, from <http://www.census.gov/prod/2000pubs/p23-203.pdf>
- Imig, D. (2006). Building a social movement for America's children. *Journal of Children and Poverty*, 12(1), 21-37.
- Lee, V.E., & Burkham, D.T. (2002). *Inequality at the Starting Gate: Social Background Differences in Achievement as Children Begin School*. Economic Policy Institute.
- McLanahan, S., & Sandefur, G. (1994). *Growing Up with a Single Parent: What Hurts, What Helps*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Memphis City Schools. (2008). Stability index report. Retrieved January 28, 2008 from http://memphisdemo2.extranet.urbanplanet.com/sites/974cdc6f-b867-4129-8e23-506faae79343/uploads/Stability_Index_Master.pdf
- Menaghan, E.G., & Parcel, T.L. (1991). Determining children's home environments: The impact of maternal characteristics and current occupational and family conditions. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 53(2), 417-431.
- Olds, D., Henderson, C.R., Cole, R., Eckenrode, J., Kitzman, H., Luckey, D., et al. (1998). Long-term effects of nurse home visitation on children's criminal and antisocial behavior: 15-year follow-up of a Randomized Controlled Trial. *Journal of the American Medical Association*, 280(14), 1238-1244.
- Osborne, C. (2007). Is marriage protective for all children at birth? A cumulative risk perspective. National Poverty Center Working Paper Series. Retrieved February 3, 2009 from http://npc.umich.edu/publications/u/working_paper07-17.pdf
- Parcel, T.L., & Dufur, M.J. (2001). Capital at home and at school: Effects on student achievement. *Social Forces*, 79(3), 881-912.
- Pribesh, S. & Downey, D.B. (1999). Why are residential and school moves associated with poor school performance? *Demography*, 36(4), 521-534.
- Putnam, R.D. (2000). *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*. New York: Simon and Schuster.
- Raley, R.K., Frisco, M.L., & Wildsmith, E. (2005). Maternal cohabitation and educational success. *Sociology of Education*, 78(2), 144-165.
- Rumberger, R.W., & Larson, K.A. (1998). Student mobility and the increased Risk of high school dropout. *American Journal of Education*, 107(1), 1-35.

References, continued

- Sigle-Rushton, W., & McLanahan, S. (2002). The Living Arrangements of New Unmarried Mothers. *Demography*, 39(3), 415-433.
- Taylor, B.A., Dearing, E., & McCartney, K. (2004). Incomes and Outcomes in Early Childhood. *The Journal of Human Resources*, 39(4), 980-1007.
- Tennessee Department of Human Services. (2008). Families First Policy Handbook. Retrieved January 28, 2009 from <http://www.tennessee.gov/humanserv/adfam/ff-handbook.pdf>
- Thomson, E., Hanson, T.L., & McLanahan, S.S. (1994). Family Structure and Child Well-Being: Economic Resources vs. Parental Behaviors. *Social Forces*, 73(1), 221-242.
- Tucker, C.J., Marx, J., & Long, L. (1998). Moving On: Residential Mobility and Children's School Lives. *Sociology of Education*, 71(2), 111-129.
- Upchurch, D., Lillard, L.A., & Panis, C.W.A. (2002). Nonmarital Childbearing: Influences of Education, Marriage, and Fertility. *Demography*, 39(2), 311-329.
- Vandivere, S., Hair, E.C., Theokas, C., Cleveland, K., McNamara, M., & Atienza, A. (2006). How Housing Affects Child Well-Being. Funder's Network for Smart Growth and Livable Communities. Retrieved January 16, 2008 from http://www.fundersnetwork.org/usr_doc/Housing_and_Child_Well_Being.pdf

Data

Chart data can be downloaded at <http://theurbanchildinstitute.org/databook>