

THE STATE OF CHILDREN IN MEMPHIS AND SHELBY COUNTY

a reference guide compiled by
The Urban Child Institute





The Urban Child Institute

A philanthropic organization that focuses on children

The institute is a coalition of community researchers, strategists and interventionists dedicated to the improvement of well-being of children, especially from conception to age 3.

We will improve the lives of children and increase the social capital of Memphis by accelerating the infusion of meaningful knowledge and intervention that will change existing policies. We will work to connect research and knowledge with action.

For other individuals and organizations who want also to improve the lives of children, they will find the institute to be a trustworthy partner and resource for expertise, advice and collaboration.

This State of Children in Memphis & Shelby County was initiated and funded by the institute. The purpose was to collect in one document all existing, important research data on children in Memphis and Shelby County. Many individuals and organizations have benefited from pieces of this data, but this is the first time that it all has been assembled in one place and then analyzed by professionals.

The data has been organized in six segments, or domains.

1. *Children's Demographics* is a necessary prelude of important statistics.
2. *Children's Health* is an overall physical exam of the city's children.
3. *Children's Educational Well-Being* is a community report card.
4. *Children's Home Environment* points out the influence of family and home.
5. *Children's Economic Well-Being* focuses on the disastrous results of poverty.
6. *Children's Community Environment* documents the impact on children of their neighborhood.

The institute's objective, and our hope, is that this reference guide will encourage and rally others into action and change. The data contained herein should provide clear direction to government leaders, education and medical professionals, community welfare and religious organizations of all types for more steps to identify objectives and strategies to improve the state of our children. The potential for many such additional actions is highlighted throughout.

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Introduction



For all the ill effects on children* in Memphis single-mother births appears to be the primary underlying cause.

Attitudes and practices regarding sex, childbirth and marriage in Memphis are such that by age 13 two-and-a-half-times more Memphis children have had sex than the Tennessee or U.S. averages. By Grades 9-12 nearly twice as many children in Memphis have had four or more different sexual partners than in the rest of America. By their senior year in high school nearly three in 10 Memphis students have had sex with four or more different people.

The result on children of these attitudes and practices in Memphis is single-mother households, almost half of which live in poverty. Poverty leads to disease, inadequate health care, low education, poor adult supervision and unemployment and under-employment, all of which beget yet another, succeeding generation with the same pattern.

- The birth rate among 15-17-year-old females in Memphis is nearly 30 percent greater than the Tennessee average and 60 percent greater than the U.S. average.
- The rate of sexually transmitted diseases in Memphis is double that in Tennessee.
- The rate of HIV/AIDS among 15-24-year-olds in Memphis is nearly three times that of the State of Tennessee and 12 times greater than the U.S. average.
Less than half of Memphis children live in homes with their married parents. Fewer than one out of three black children lives with married parents.
- Single mothers in Memphis earn one-third of the income of married couples.

* "Children" is defined throughout as anyone under the age of 19.

- Nearly 50 percent of Memphis children living with single mothers live in poverty.
- Almost 58 percent of Memphis children under 5 living with single mothers live in poverty.
- Historically, poverty results in lower education, employment and income levels, and higher crime rates.
- The infant death rate in Memphis is the highest in the U.S.
- The infant death rate in Shelby County is 50 percent greater than in Tennessee and more than double the U.S. rate.
- The Shelby County death rate among children aged 1-14 is 12 percent greater than Tennessee's and nearly 30 percent greater than in the U.S.