



*Championing optimal brain development from conception to three.*

## Our Mission

The Urban Child Institute (TUCI) is a coalition of community researchers, strategists and interventionists dedicated to the improvement of the well-being of children, especially from conception to age three.

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.

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

The State of Children in Memphis & Shelby County was initiated and funded by TUCI and first published in 2006. The initial purpose was to collect in one document the existing important research data on children in Memphis and Shelby County. Since 2006, the Data Book and its professional analysis have evolved and many individuals and organizations have found it beneficial.

This 2009 volume has continued to track and update the data. It also includes “Shelby County at a Glance,” which provides an indication of whether the state of children is improving or worsening on specific measurable variables.

TUCI’s objective and hope continue to be that the Data Book will encourage and rally others into action for positive change. The data contained herein are targeted at government leaders, education and healthcare professionals, religious organizations, and community stakeholders of all types. The Data Book should provide clear direc-

tion for identifying new objectives and strategies to improve the state of our children.

The data have been organized in seven segments.

1. *Building the Brain* is an overview of brain development and explains how conception to age three is a critical period of development.
2. *Demographics* provides a baseline to measure how well children are doing in Shelby County.
3. *Health* is an overall physical exam of the city’s children.
4. *Family and Home Environment* reports the impact of family structure, income, residential stability, and education.
5. *Education* is a profile of accessibility, quality, and affordability of early childhood education and later assessment test outcomes of Memphis City School students.
6. *Community* examines the ways in which children are affected by neighborhood influences and the distribution of community assets.
7. *Best Practices for Solutions* quantifies the benefits of applying, in Memphis and Shelby County, proven strategies that have been successful elsewhere.

It is not TUCI’s intention to imply that these are the only areas of interest on the topic of children in Shelby County. Opportunities exist for professionals in all fields to identify other areas of importance. The potential for such extensions of this work are highlighted throughout.

## Acknowledgments

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The 2009 Data Book can be downloaded at <http://www.theurbanchildinstitute.org>

## Introduction

In previous editions of *The State of Children in Memphis and Shelby County*, The Urban Child Institute (TUCI) identified challenges faced by many children in our community—challenges which make it difficult for them to reach the same level of achievement as other children. Unfortunately, conditions have not improved in the past year.

As in recent years, many of our children are born into families that have too little income and not enough education, and live in neighborhoods which do not support healthy child development. Because 80 percent of brain development occurs between conception and age three, these early influences can have lasting consequences for a child's life outcomes.

For this reason, TUCI focuses on the well-being of children in these early years. On this front, there is reason to worry: The infant mortality rate for black children in Shelby County is more than triple the rate for white children, for example, and black infants are more than twice as likely as white infants to be born prematurely. The percentage of births to single mothers is increasing, which means that a growing proportion of children are being raised by mothers with less education and lower earnings.

Further, many of the disadvantages faced by children affect all types of families. Poverty has risen for both married and unmarried families with children. At the same time, affordable high-quality child care is rare even in many wealthy neighborhoods, and many working families earn too much to qualify for public assistance and too little to afford quality care. As a result, their children may have more problems when they begin school.

Fortunately, we can point to many programs from across the country which have proven effective in helping to break the cycle of poverty and improving child well-being. Some of these are discussed in the Best Practice section of this year's Data Book. Research shows that interventions aimed at children aged three and younger provide the highest return on investment. Making the well-being of our youngest children a priority for our community is therefore both morally and practically desirable. We believe that improving the circumstances of children during this crucial period is the best investment that our community can make.

## Shelby County At a Glance

Indicator (Year of Latest Date in Parentheses)	Row number of latest year	Raw number of previous year	Increased (+) Decreased (-) Same (=)	Change Better (B) Worse (W)
<b>Population</b>				
Total Population (2007)	910,100	911,438	–	W
Child Population (2007)	249,093	253,729	–	W
Child Population Under six (2007)	84,744	85,789	–	W
Child Population Under three (2007)	40,451	44,693	–	W
Live Births (2007)*	15,234	15,167	+	B
<b>Family</b>				
Families (2007)	220,560	220,953	–	W
Families with Children (2007)	117,509	121,459	–	W
Married Parent Families with Children (2007)	59,856	60,537	–	W
Single Parent Families with Children (2007)	57,653	60,922	–	B
Live Births to Unmarried Mothers (2007)*	8,954	8,617	+	W
Live Births to Teen Mothers (2007)*	2,352	2,236	+	W
<b>Economic Security</b>				
Median Family Income (2007)	\$56,803	\$51,006	+	B
Median Income of Families with Children (2007)	\$48,558	\$44,040	+	B
Total Population Below Poverty (2007)	178,796	162,925	+	W
Children Below Poverty (2007)	74,895	68,418	+	W
People who Moved within the County (2007)	129,876	131,839	–	B
<b>Education</b>				
Pre-K or Child Care Enrollment (2007)	17,196	12,733	+	B
Undergraduate College Enrollment (2007)	45,394	44,349	+	B
Memphis City Schools Graduation Rate (2008)**	66.9	69.6	–	W
Memphis City Schools Cohort Dropout Rate (2008)**	19.3	14.7	+	W
Memphis City Schools Composite ACT Achievement(2008)**	17.7	17.7	=	
<b>Child Health</b>				
Low Birth Weight Live Births (2007)*	1,698	1,713	–	B
Infant Death (2007)*	193	209	–	B
Child Deaths (2007)*	231	250	–	B

Notes: Unless otherwise specified, all data is from U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey.

\* Tennessee Department of Health, Vital Statistics.

\*\* Tennessee Department of Education, Report Card.