



## Center for Urban Child Policy

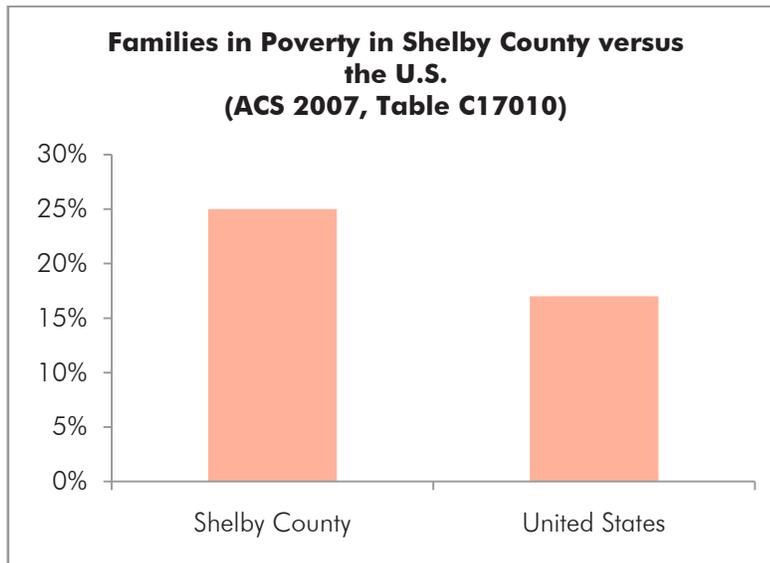
Advancing Public Policy to Improve the Well-Being of Children

# SINGLE PARENTS, TEEN PARENTS, PARENTS' EDUCATION, AND THE WELL-BEING OF CHILDREN IN SHELBY COUNTY

March 2009



**IN SHELBY COUNTY, 25% OF FAMILIES WITH A CHILD UNDER 18 LIVE IN POVERTY. NATIONALLY, 16% OF FAMILIES WITH A CHILD UNDER 18 LIVE IN POVERTY.**



Families are stronger and more stable when parents are out of their teens and have finished high school if not college.

- » Parents have the best ability to provide financially for their families when they are well educated.
- » The likelihood that marriages will be stable and that adults will have enough education to obtain decent jobs increases significantly when people are out of their early 20's before becoming parents.

**In Shelby County, children raised in families headed by a single parent are over 7 times more likely to grow up in poverty than children in families headed by a married couple.**

- » Poverty rates for single parent families are worse in Shelby County than across the country.
- » In Shelby County, 48% of children raised by single mothers live in poverty. By comparison, 5% of children raised by married parents are in poverty (ACS, 2007).
- » Unmarried mothers are 40 percent less likely to ever marry than are women who have not had a child (Sawhill 2002).
- » Unwed mothers are more likely to marry men who are high school drop-outs or are



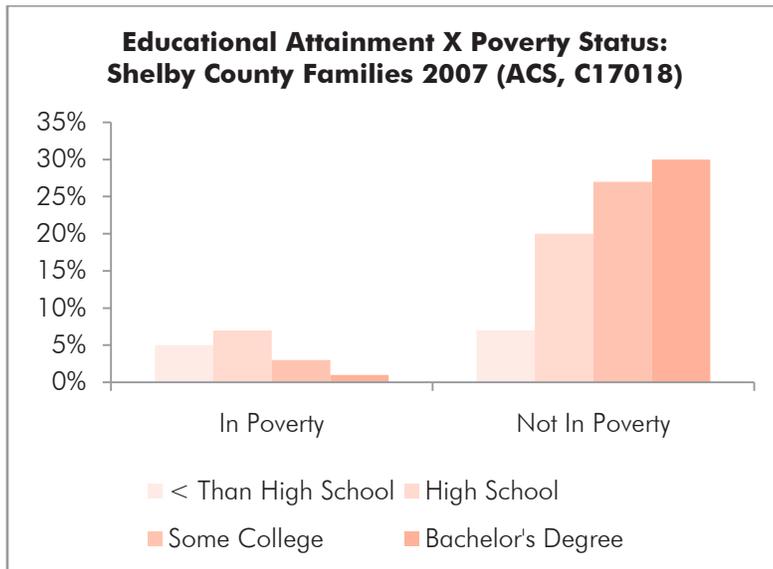
unemployed, compared with women with similar educational backgrounds but no children (Sawhill 2002).

**In 2006, 15% of all babies born in Shelby County were born to teen mothers - 36% higher than the national average (11%).**

- » Approximately a quarter of births to teen mothers were not first births; more than 85% of teen mothers (< 20 years of age) report annual incomes of less than \$15,000 (TN DOH birth certificate data, 2006).
- » Across the nation, one-half of all teenage mothers and over three-quarters of unmarried teen mothers begin receiving welfare within five years of the birth of their first child (National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy).
- » Householders under 25 in Shelby County have a median yearly income of \$21,521. Householders between 25 and 44 in Shelby County have a median yearly income of \$44,946 (ACS 2007, B19049).
- » Estimates suggest that teen pregnancy cost Shelby County approximately \$42.6 million dollars in 2006.

**In Shelby County, parents who finished college were significantly less likely to raise their children in poverty than parents without a college degree.**

- » 31% of families in Shelby County have at least one parent with a bachelor's degree;



2% of these families live in poverty (ACS 2007, C17018).

- » In 12% of families in Shelby County, no parents has a high school diploma; 41% of these families live in poverty.
- » The majority of Shelby County families have a parent who has completed high school, but who has not earned a four-year degree (57%).
- » Median income for an individual with a college degree in Shelby County is \$47,138. Meanwhile, the median income for an individual without a high school diploma is \$17,281 (ACS 2007, B20004).

### Implications for the well-being of children in Shelby County:

- » Many children in Shelby County are born to unmarried parents, teen parents, and parents with low levels of education. These families are significantly more likely to be poor or low-income and they lack access to the resources needed to provide the enriching interactions that nurture maximum social and emotional development in babies and toddlers.
- » Poor families are more vulnerable to disruption and instability. Too often, children in these families reach school at a developmental disadvantage, and lag behind their middle-income peers on measures of academic success.
- » Reducing rates of teen and single parenthood leads to higher levels of education and to better outcomes for children.
- » Reducing rates of teen and single parenthood also reduces health care, child welfare, and incarceration costs and raises levels of tax-revenue.
- » Targeted interventions—including nurse home visiting programs, high quality child development centers, and universal pre-kindergarten education— promote healthy brain growth, raise levels of academic success and reduce rates of teen and single parenthood.

Unless otherwise noted, all data figures were collected and compiled from the U.S. Census Bureau's American Factfinder 2007 or birth certificate data provided by the Tennessee Department of Health, and analyzed by the Center for Urban Child Policy, The Urban Child Institute.



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