

2014 Memphis Poverty Fact Sheet (Data from 2013 ACS)

Who are the Poor?

Memphis has a poverty rate of 27.7%. Child poverty is 45.7%, while poverty rates for people over age 65 are the lowest at 11.6%. Poverty rates for Blacks are 33.5%, and 47.0% of Latinos are poor, while the poverty rate among non-Hispanic Whites is 9.8%.

The Poverty Rate in Memphis and Shelby County Compared to National Rates

In general, poverty rates for the City of Memphis are higher than poverty rates in Shelby County for every category. Both are higher than poverty rates in Tennessee, and Tennessee poverty rates are higher than U.S. poverty rates in almost every category (racial and ethnic groups, and age groups). The notable exception to this is the poverty rate for people over 65, which is lower in Shelby County than elsewhere. Poverty rates for non-Hispanic Whites have continued to fall since 2009, and are lower than poverty rates for this group at the state and national levels.

New in 2014

Poverty rates have generally declined, but in Memphis and Shelby County child poverty rates have increased, as have Latino poverty rates.

Figure 1 – Poverty Rates in 2012 and 2013 in Memphis and Shelby County

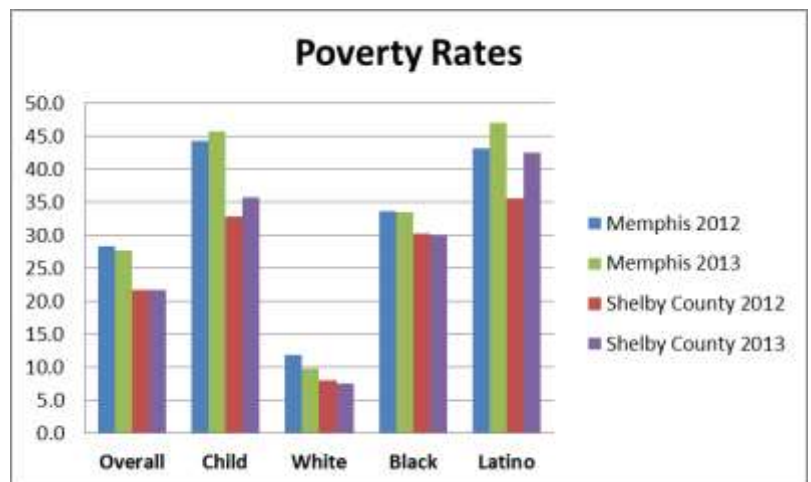


Chart by the author from data from the 2012 and 2013 ACS 1-Y Estimates (Table S1701: Poverty Status in the Past 12 Months), September 18, 2014.

Figure 2 – Percent of the Population under Poverty

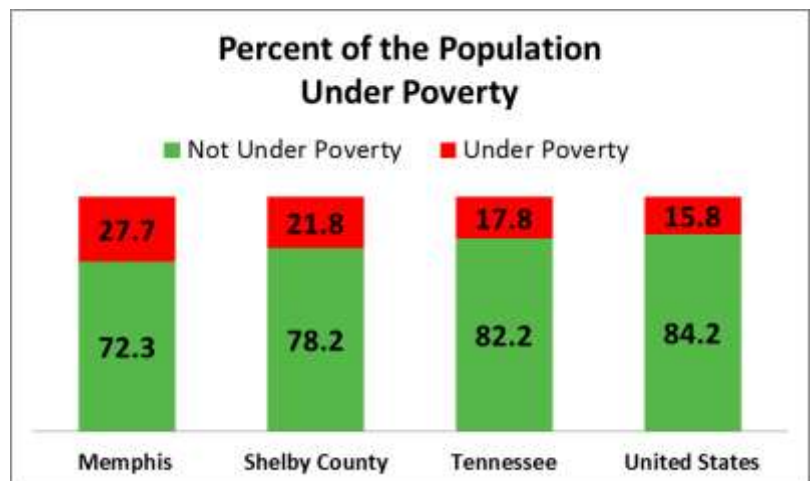


Chart by the author from data from the 2013 ACS 1-Y Estimates (Table S1701: Poverty Status in the Past 12 Months), September 18, 2014.

Table 1 – Diverse Poverty Rates in Memphis, Shelby County, Tennessee, and the United States

2013 Poverty Rate	Overall	Under 18	18-64	Over 65	Non-Hispanic White	Black	Latino	Asian
Memphis	27.7%	45.7%	23.2%	11.6%	9.8%	33.5%	47.0%	14.6%
Shelby County	21.8%	35.8%	18.3%	9.1%	7.6%	30.0%	42.6%	7.9%
Tennessee	17.8%	26.5%	16.4%	9.7%	14.2%	28.9%	33.9%	9.1%
United States	15.8%	22.2%	14.8%	9.6%	11.1%	27.6%	24.8%	12.7%

Figure 3 – Percent Change in Poverty Rates

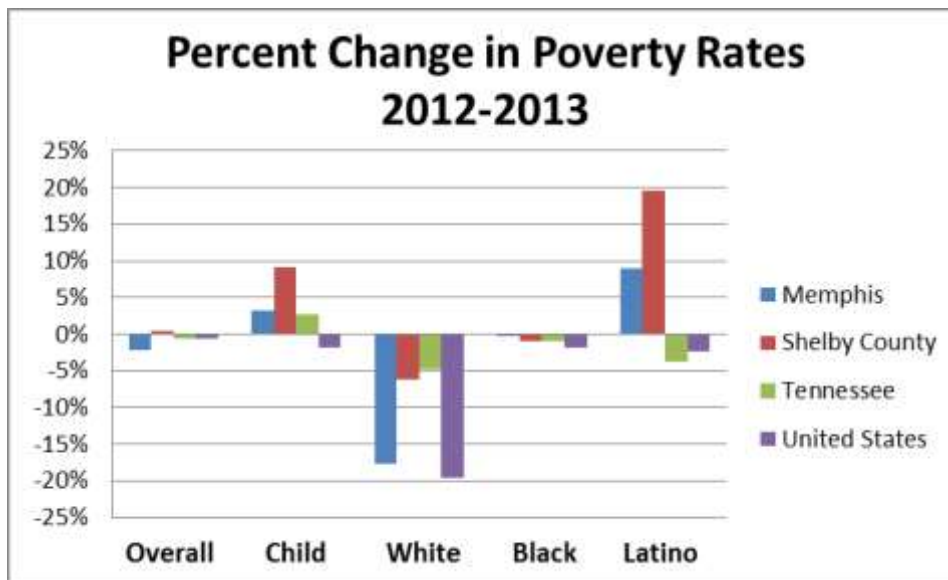


Chart by the author from data from the 2013 ACS 1-Y Estimates (Table S1701: Poverty Status in the Past 12 Months), September 18, 2014.

Poverty Rankings

In 2013, Memphis retained the unfortunate top spot in both overall and child (under 18) poverty rates among Metropolitan Statistical Areas (MSA) with populations greater than 1,000,000, a rather unsavory achievement. When including MSA with populations greater than 500,000, Memphis has shown improvement in overall poverty rates, going from third place to fourth. However, even in this case Memphis lost ground in child (under 18) poverty rates, slipping to first place from second. A similar situation occurs when including only cities with populations greater than 500,000 inhabitants – Memphis has risen to tenth place overall, but fallen from eighth to seventh place in child (under 18) poverty rates.

The rank number denotes the position of a city or MSA relative to others. The higher the rank number, the higher the poverty rate for that locality. In other words, a higher ranking is not desirable. Rank change denotes the number of “spots” a city or MSA has moved up or down in the rankings.

Table 2 – Memphis’ Rank in Poverty Rates

Memphis		2012		2013			
		Poverty Rate	Poverty Rank	Poverty Rate	Poverty Rank	Rank Change	% Change
Among Cities with Populations Greater than 500,000 (34 Cities)	Overall	28.3%	3rd	27.70%	4th	-1	-2%
	Under 18	44.3%	2nd	45.70%	3rd	1	3%
Among MSA with Populations Greater than 500,000 (104 MSA)	Overall	19.9%	9th	19.80%	10th	-1	-1%
	Under 18	29.7%	8th	30.60%	7th	-1	3%
Among MSA with Populations Greater than 1,000,000 (51 MSA)	Overall	19.9%	1st	19.80%	1st	----	-1%
	Under 18	29.7%	1st	30.60%	1st	----	3%

The cities and MSA that ranked first in overall and child (under 18) poverty rates retained their dubious first places. However, poverty rates in general did not increase or decrease. The exception was the child (under 18) poverty rate in the Memphis MSA (among MSA with populations over 1,000,000), which increased 3% from 2012 to 2013, a disheartening fact given the direction of other poverty rates.

Table 3 – Highest Poverty Rates in Cities and MSA in the United States

Highest Poverty Rates Rank 1		2012		2013			
		Rank 1	Poverty Rate	Rank 1	Poverty Rate	Rank Change	% Change
Among Cities with Populations Greater than 500,000 (34 Cities)	Overall	Detroit City, Michigan	42.3%	Detroit city, Michigan	40.7%	----	-3.9%
	Under 18	Detroit City, Michigan	59.4%	Detroit City, Michigan	58.6%	----	-1.4%
Among MSA with Populations Greater than 500,000 (104 MSA)	Overall	McAllen-Edinburg-Mission, TX Metro Area	34.3%	McAllen-Edinburg-Mission, TX Metro Area	34.3%	----	----
	Under 18	McAllen-Edinburg-Mission, TX Metro Area	46.5%	McAllen-Edinburg-Mission, TX Metro Area	44.9	----	-3.6%
Among MSA with Populations Greater than 1,000,000 51 MSA)	Overall	Memphis, TN-MS-AR Metro Area	19.9%	Memphis, TN-MS-AR Metro Area	19.8%	----	-0.5%
	Under 18	Memphis, TN-MS-AR Metro Area	29.7%	Memphis, TN-MS-AR Metro Area	30.6	----	2.9%

The Relationship between Poverty and Race

The poor in Memphis tend to be minorities. The poverty rates for Blacks and Latino are higher than the overall poverty rate, and poverty rates for minorities are higher in every age category than poverty rates for non-Hispanic Whites. Moreover, poverty rates for non-Hispanic Whites are lower in Memphis and Shelby County than in Tennessee as a whole or the United States in every age category.

Tables 4-6 – Poverty Rates by Age, Race, and Location

The Intersection of Age and Race	Memphis, TN-MS-AR Metro Area			
	All Ages	Under 18	18-59	60+
All Races	19.8%	30.6%	17.5%	11.3%
non-Hispanic White	8.4%	9.8%	8.7%	6.6%
Black	29.2%	43.2%	24.6%	18.8%
Latino	38.3%	52.4%	29.9%	19.3%

The Intersection of Age and Race	Memphis City				Shelby County			
	All Ages	Under 18	18-59	60+	All Ages	Under 18	18-59	60+
All Races	27.7%	45.7%	23.8%	13.6%	21.8%	35.8%	18.9%	10.3%
non-Hispanic White	9.8%	9.9%	11.6%	5.5%	7.6%	10.0%	8.1%	4.4%
Black	33.5%	52.8%	27.7%	19.3%	30.0%	46.4%	24.8%	17.3%
Latino	47.0%	62.5%	37.1%	17.1%	42.6%	58.0%	33.1%	23.3%

The Intersection of Age and Race	Tennessee				United States			
	All Ages	Under 18	18-59	60+	All Ages	Under 18	18-59	60+
All Races	17.8%	26.5%	17.0%	10.1%	15.8%	22.2%	15.3%	9.9%
non-Hispanic White	14.2%	19.3%	14.7%	8.8%	11.1%	13.5%	11.8%	7.7%
Black	28.9%	43.7%	24.3%	18.2%	27.6%	39.1%	24.4%	19.2%
Latino	33.9%	45.5%	27.2%	18.5%	24.8%	32.8%	21.1%	18.9%

Memphis Has the Highest Poverty Rates, But Not for Everyone

It was observed that the poverty rate among non-Hispanic Whites only is much lower in Memphis and Shelby County than in the state or the nation as a whole. This relationship is not expected, given how high poverty rates are in Memphis for other racial groups. In 2013, that relationship held, with particularly cruel consequences for Latinos.

Table 7 – Comparison of Poverty Rates and Poverty Trends for non-Hispanic Whites Only and Blacks Only

Memphis non-Hispanic Whites Only	2013			
	Overall Poverty Rate	Overall Poverty Rank	non-Hispanic White Poverty Rate	non-Hispanic White Poverty Rank
Among Cities with Populations Greater than 500,000 (34 Cities)	27.7%	4th	9.8%	26th
Among MSA with Populations Greater than 500,000 (104 MSA)	19.8%	10th	8.4%	76th
Among MSA with Populations Greater than 1,000,000 (51 MSA)	19.8%	1st	8.7%	32nd

It is very interesting to note that while Memphis ranks first among large metro areas (population greater than 1,000,000), when the poverty rate for non-Hispanic Whites is considered by itself, Memphis ranks much lower. The differences between the poverty rates of minority groups and non-Hispanic Whites are striking.

Figures 4-5 – Comparison of Poverty Rates and Poverty Trends for non-Hispanic Whites Only and Blacks Only

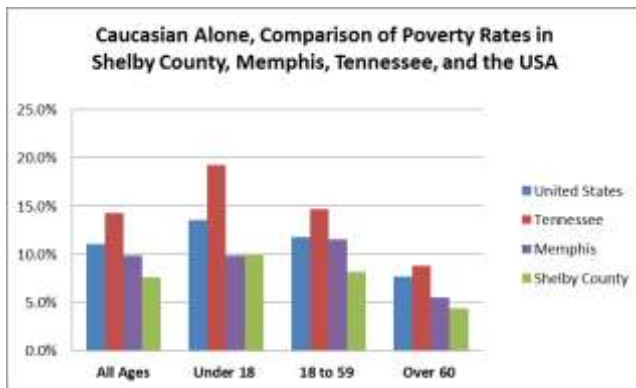


Chart by the author from data from the 2012 ACS 1-Y Estimates, September 30, 2013.

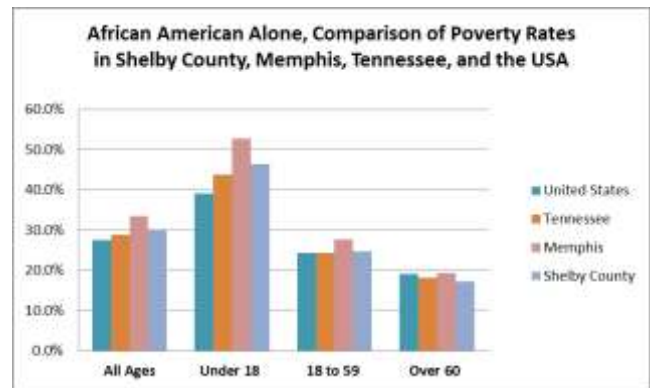


Chart by the author from data from the 2012 ACS 1-Y Estimates, September 30, 2013.

The poverty rates for non-Hispanic Whites are better in Memphis and Shelby County than for the same group in Tennessee or the United States, while the rates for Blacks are worse. It is also interesting to note that for non-Hispanic Whites, the worst poverty rates are at the state level.

Poverty Trends – Has Poverty Gotten Worse?

Since 2005, poverty rates in Memphis have risen and the 2008 economic crisis resulted in increased poverty rates for all racial and age groups at that time. It is important to note that some groups were able to recover much sooner. Note that poverty rates among people over age 65 are lower than for the rest of the population. This is attributed to Social Security. In 2012 there was an increase in the poverty rate for people over 65. Given 2013 figures, the increase in the poverty rate for persons over age 65 in Shelby County appears to have been a statistical anomaly that has corrected itself.

The Widening Gap

Since their highest point in 2009, poverty rates for non-Hispanic Whites alone have decreased in every age category, but poverty rates for Blacks and Latinos have remained high and the increase in the poverty rate for Latinos appears to have accelerated. A decline in the poverty rate for Latinos observed in the 2011 ACS is now attributed to a statistical anomaly. An interesting observation is that poverty rates among non-Hispanic Whites are now much lower in Memphis and Shelby County than in the state or the nation as a whole. This relationship is not expected.

Figure 6 – Trends in Poverty Rates by Age, Memphis

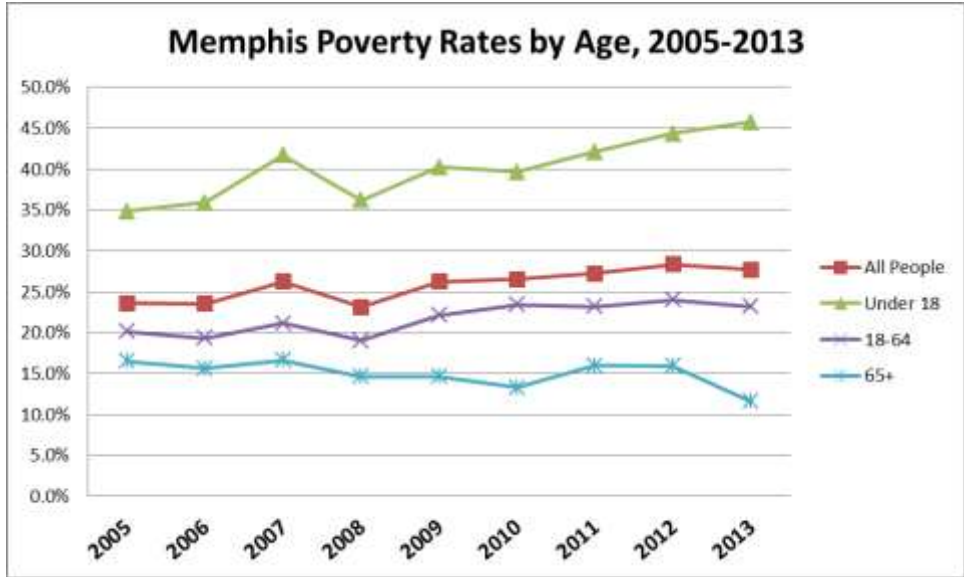


Chart by the author from data from the 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012, and 2013 ACS 1-Y Estimates and ACS 3-Y Estimates, September 30, 2013.

Figure 7 – Trends in Poverty Rates by Age, Shelby County

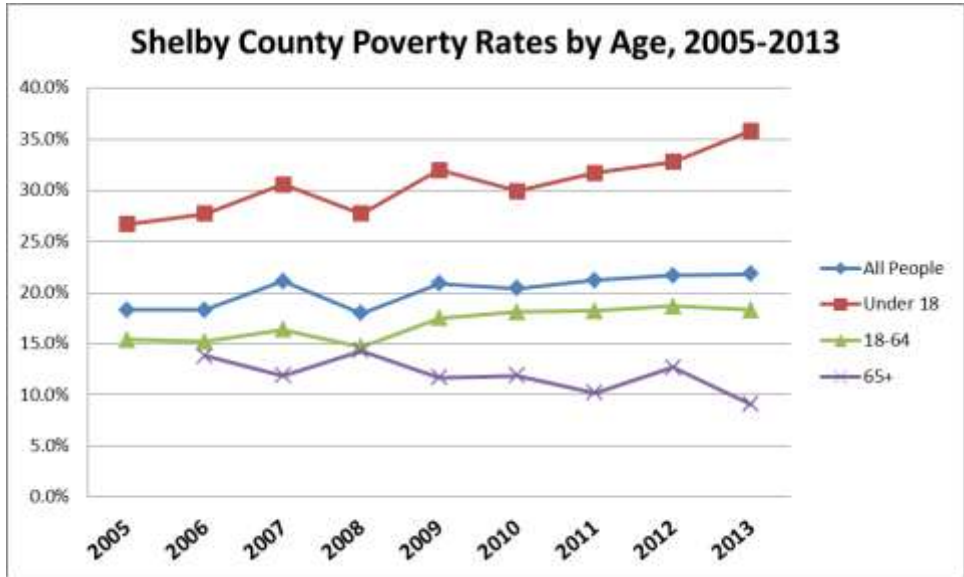


Chart by the author from data from the 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012, and 2013 ACS 1-Y Estimates and ACS 3-Y Estimates, September 30, 2013.

Figure 8 – Trends in Poverty Rates by Race, Memphis

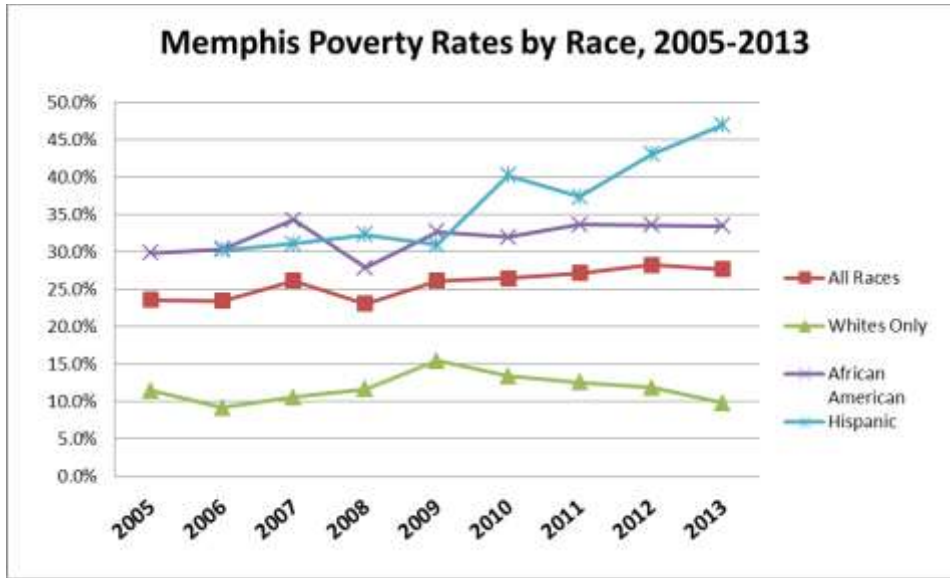


Chart by the author from data from the 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012, and 2013 ACS 1-Y Estimates and ACS 3-Y Estimates, September 30, 2013.

Figure 9 – Trends in Poverty Rates by Race, Shelby County

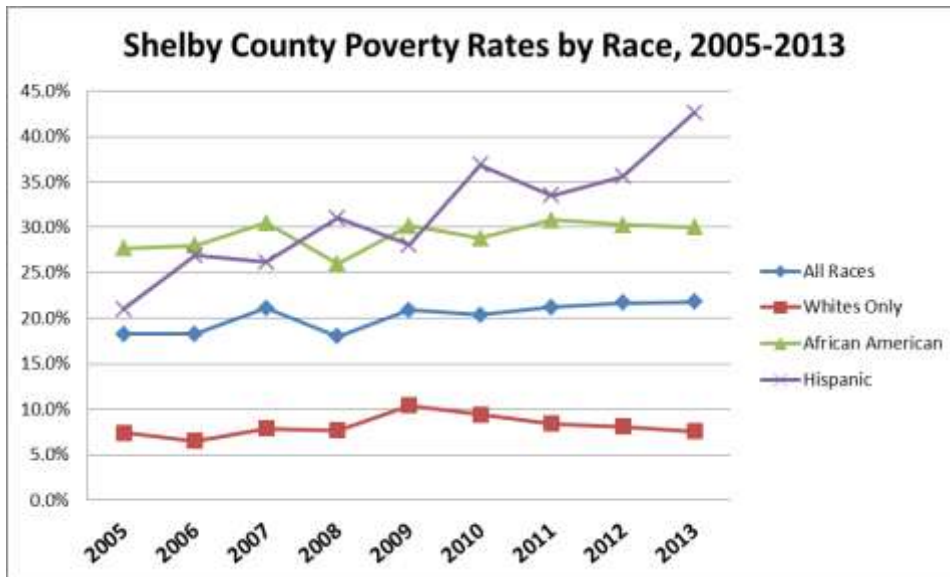


Chart by the author from data from the 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012, and 2013 ACS 1-Y Estimates and ACS 3-Y Estimates, September 30, 2013.

The Department of Social Work in the School of Urban Affairs and Public Policy at the University of Memphis is dedicated to understanding poverty and its causes through research and engaged scholarship. Our purpose is to identify the most effective ways to eliminate poverty and promote social and economic development for our region. If you would like more information on Memphis poverty, please contact Dr. Elena Delavega at mdlavega@memphis.edu

Sources:

Data obtained from the US Bureau of the Census, September 18, 2014

All Data except Latino (Hispanic): 2012 and 2013 ACS 1-Y Estimates (Table S1701: Poverty Status in the Past 12 Months); 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2009, 2011, & 2012 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates (US Bureau of the Census)

Latino (Hispanic) Data: 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010, & 2011 American Community Survey 3-Year Estimates (US Bureau of the Census).