

2013 Memphis Poverty Fact Sheet (Data from 2012)

Who are the Poor?

Memphis has a poverty rate of 28.30%. Child poverty is 44.30%, while poverty rates for people over age 65 are the lowest. Poverty rates for African Americans are 33.6%, and 43.10% of Latinos are poor, while the poverty rate among Caucasians is 11.9%.

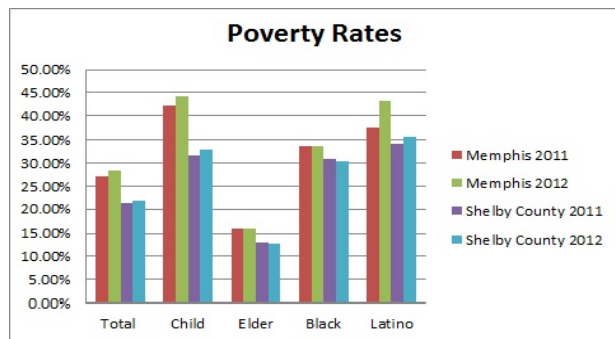


Chart by the author from data from the 2011, and 2012 ACS 1-Y Estimates and ACS 3-Y Estimates, September 30, 2013.

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). However, poverty rates for Caucasians (non-Hispanic) have fallen since 2009, and are lower than poverty rates for this group at the state and national levels.

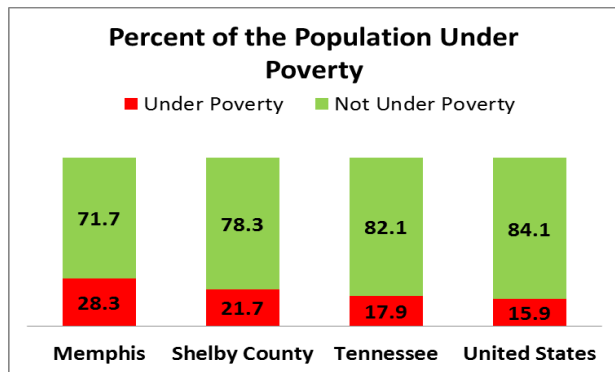


Chart by the author from data from the 2012 ACS 1-Y Estimates, September 30, 2013.

2012 Poverty Rate	Overall	Caucasian Alone	African American	Hispanic	Asian	Under 18	18-64	Over 65
Memphis	28.3%	11.9%	33.6%	43.1%	28.7%	44.3%	24%	15.9%
Shelby County	21.7%	8.1%	30.3%	35.6%	16.1%	32.8%	18.7%	12.7%
Tennessee	17.9%	14.9%	29.2%	35.2%	16.8%	25.8%	16.8%	10%
United States	15.9%	13.8%	28.1%	25.4%	13%	22.6%	14.8%	9.5%

Poverty Rankings

In 2012, Memphis achieved the dubious honor of having the highest overall AND child (under 18) poverty rate among Metropolitan Statistical Areas (MSA) with populations greater than 1,000,000. When including MSA with populations greater than 500,000, Memphis has fallen to third place overall (from fifth) and second place in child (under 18) poverty (from third). Even among cities with more than 500,000 inhabitants Memphis has fallen from eleventh to ninth place overall, and remained in eighth place in child poverty (under 18). While poverty rates have increased for some MSA and cities, of note is the McAllen-Edinburg-Mission, TX Metro Area, which has reduced poverty rates significantly, suggesting that poverty solutions are within reach.

Memphis		2011		2012			
		Poverty Rate	Poverty Rank	Poverty Rate	Poverty Rank	Rank Change	% Change
Among Cities with Populations Greater than 500,000 (33 Cities)	Overall	27.2%	5th	28.3%	3rd	-2	4%
	Under 18	42.1%	3rd	44.3%	2nd	-1	5.2%
Among MSA with Populations Greater than 500,000 (101 MSA)	Overall	19.3%	11th	19.9%	9th	-2	3.1%
	Under 18	28.9%	8th	29.7%	8th	----	2.8%
Among MSA with Populations Greater than 1,000,000 (51 MSA)	Overall	19.3%	2nd	19.9%	1st	-1	3.1%
	Under 18	28.9%	1st	29.7%	1st	----	2.8%

With its overall poverty rate increasing to 19.9% in 2012 from 19.3% in 2011, Memphis went from second to first place in overall poverty rates for MSA with populations greater than 1,000,000. New Orleans had the highest poverty rate for a large MSA in 2011 (19.5%), but its poverty rate declined to 19.4% in 2012.

Highest Poverty Rates Rank 1		2011		2012			
		Rank 1	Poverty Rate	Rank 1	Poverty Rate	Rank Change	% Change
Among Cities with Populations Greater than 500,000 (33 Cities)	Overall	Detroit City, Michigan	40.9%	Detroit City, Michigan	42.3%	----	3.4%
	Under 18	Detroit City, Michigan	57.3%	Detroit City, Michigan	59.4%	----	3.7%
Among MSA with Populations Greater than 500,000 (101 MSA)	Overall	McAllen-Edinburg-Mission, TX Metro Area	37.7%	McAllen-Edinburg-Mission, TX Metro Area	34.5%	----	-8.5%
	Under 18	McAllen-Edinburg-Mission, TX Metro Area	48.8%	McAllen-Edinburg-Mission, TX Metro Area	46.5%	----	-4.7%
Among MSA with Populations Greater than 1,000,000 (51 MSA)	Overall	New Orleans-Metairie-Kenner, LA Metro Area*	19.5%	Memphis, TN-MS-AR Metro Area	19.9%	-1	2.7%
	Under 18	Memphis, TN-MS-AR Metro Area	28.9%	Memphis, TN-MS-AR Metro Area	29.7%	----	1.7%

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. Rank change denotes the number of “spots” a city or MSA has moved up or down in the rankings.

The Relationship between Poverty and Race

The poor in Memphis tend to be minorities. The poverty rates for African Americans and Hispanics are higher than the overall poverty rate, and poverty rates for minorities are higher in every age category than poverty rates for Caucasians. Moreover, poverty rates for Caucasians are lower in Memphis and Shelby County than in Tennessee as a whole or the United States in every age category.

The Intersection of Age and Race	Memphis, TN-MS-AR Metro Area			
	All Ages	Under 18	18-64	65+
All Races	19.9%	29.7%	17.2%	11.7%
Caucasian Alone	8.7%	10.8%	8.9%	5.1%
African American	29.6%	41.8%	24.7%	24.0%
Hispanic	33.3%	44.9%	26.0%	20.0%
Asian	14.5%	N/A	N/A	N/A

The Intersection of Age and Race	Memphis City				Shelby County			
	All Ages	Under 18	18-64	65+	All Ages	Under 18	18-64	65+
All Races	28.3%	44.3%	24.0%	15.9%	21.7%	32.8%	18.7%	12.7%
Caucasian Alone	11.9%	14.0%	12.7%	6.8%	8.1%	8.9%	8.7%	4.9%
African American	33.6%	43.2%	25.3%	23.5%	30.3%	43.2%	25.3%	23.5%
Hispanic	43.1%	N/A	N/A	N/A	35.6%	N/A	N/A	N/A
Asian	28.7%	N/A	N/A	N/A	16.1%	N/A	N/A	N/A

The Intersection of Age and Race	Tennessee				United States			
	All Ages	Under 18	18-64	65+	All Ages	Under 18	18-64	65+
All Races	17.9%	25.8%	16.8%	10%	15.9%	22.6%	14.8%	9.5%
Caucasian Alone	14.1%	18.2%	14.2%	8.7%	11.9%	13.6%	11.2%	7.3%
African American	29.2%	42.4%	24.5%	19.9%	28.1%	39.6%	24.5%	19%
Hispanic	35.2%	46.2%	28.9%	15.9%	25.4%	33.7%	21.3%	19.8%
Asian	16.8%	22.3%	15.0%	14.5%	13.0%	13.9%	12.7%	13.3%

Memphis Has the Highest Poverty Rates, But Not for Everyone

It was observed that the poverty rate among Caucasians 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.

Memphis Caucasians Only	2012			
	Overall Poverty Rate	Overall Poverty Rank	Caucasian Poverty Rate	Caucasian Poverty Rank
Among Cities with Populations Greater than 500,000 (33 Cities)	28.3%	3rd	11.9%	14th
Among MSA with Populations Greater than 500,000 (101 MSA)	19.9%	9th	8.7%	41st
Among MSA with Populations Greater than 1,000,000 (51 MSA)	19.9%	1st	8.7%	30th

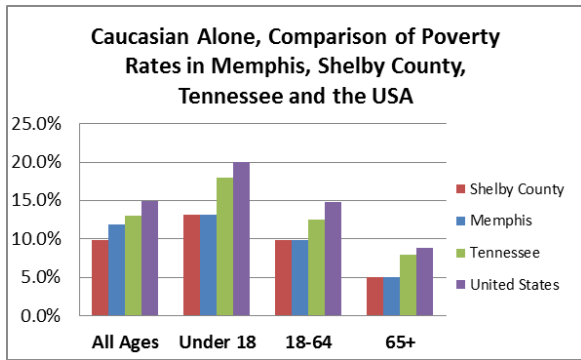


Chart by the author from data from the 2012 ACS 1-Y Estimates, September 30, 2013.

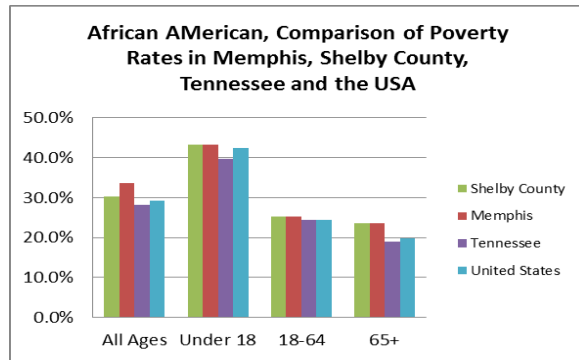


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Trends in Poverty Rates

Since 2005, poverty rates in Memphis have risen and the 2008 economic crisis resulted in increased poverty rates for all racial and age groups. Note that poverty rates among people over age 65 are lower than for the rest of the population. This is attributed to Social Security. However, in 2012 there is an increase in the poverty rate for people over 65 in Shelby County. It is too early to tell if this is a trend or an anomaly.

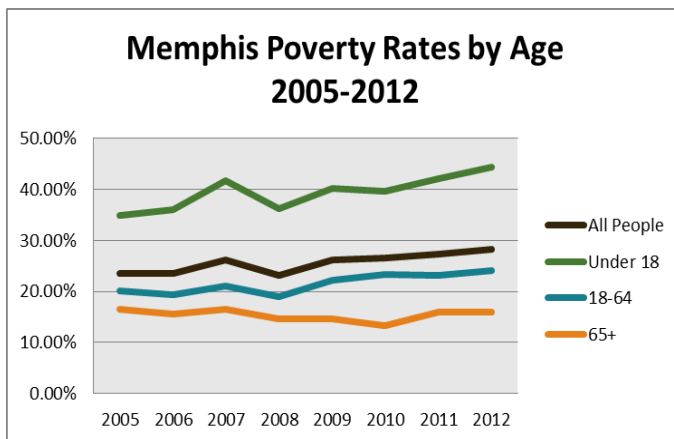


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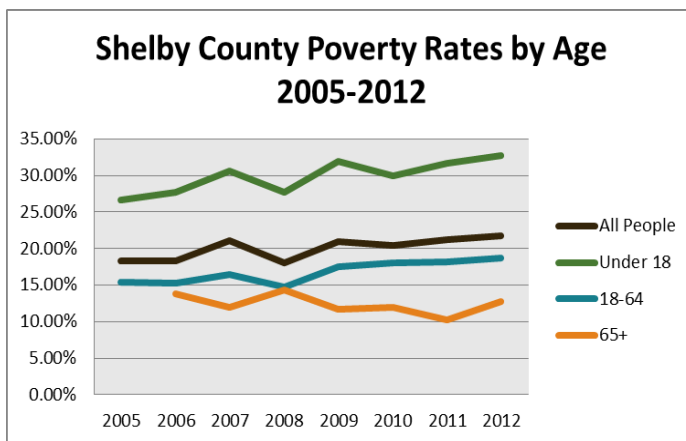


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The Widening Gap

Since their highest point in 2009, poverty rates for Caucasians alone (non-Hispanic or Latino) have decreased in every age category, but poverty rates for African Americans and Latinos (Hispanics) have remained high. A decline in the poverty rate for Hispanics/Latinos observed in 2012 is now attributed to a statistical anomaly. An interesting observation is that poverty rates among Caucasians are now much lower in Memphis and Shelby County than in the state or the nation as a whole. This relationship is not expected.

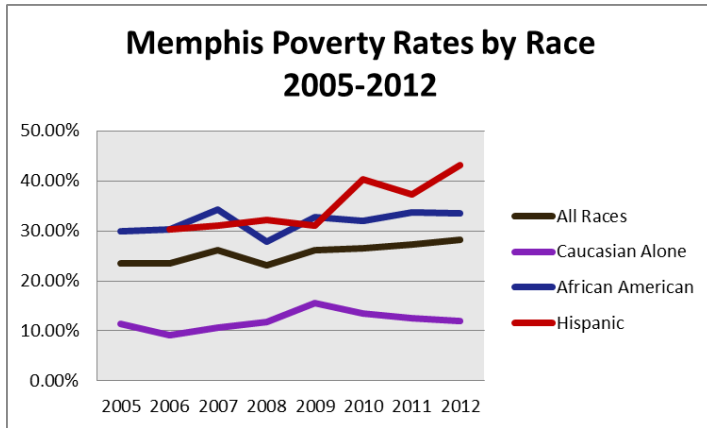


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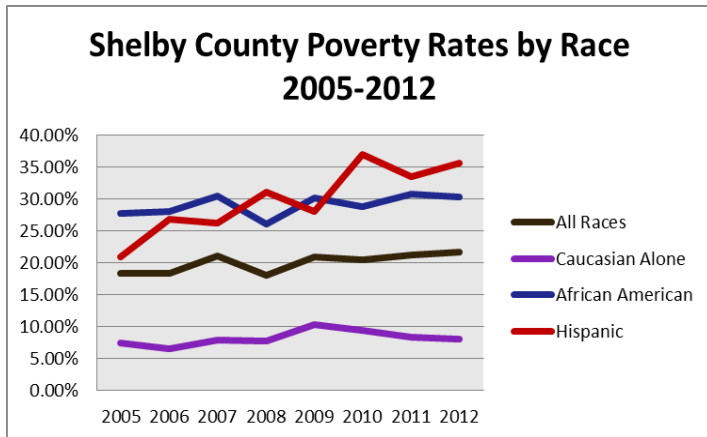


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The Department of Social Work in the School of Urban Affairs and Public Policy at the University of Memphis is dedicated to understanding poverty and its causes through research and engaged scholarship. Our purpose is to identify the most effective 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 30, 2013

All Data except Hispanic: 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2009, 2011, & 2012 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates (US Bureau of the Census)

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