




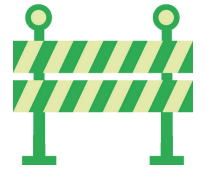






## Employment Roadblocks Summary

An analysis of workforce data associated with the population experiencing poverty in Memphis identified several factors that inhibit employment pathways. Below are the most significant roadblocks supported by the evidence.

ROADBLOCK	DESCRIPTION
 <p><b>Insufficient math and literacy proficiency impede entry to and success in technical training</b></p>	<p>An estimated 100,000 Memphians experiencing poverty are in need of academic remediation to access career &amp; technical education that can unlock living-wage jobs.</p>
 <p><b>The lack of resources and support allow seemingly insignificant factors to derail the completion of career &amp; technical education</b></p>	<p>6 in 10 Tennessee community college students experiencing poverty do not continue after the first year. Numerous compounding factors, such as incidental life expenses and enrollment processes, can undermine program completion.</p>
 <p><b>Limited coordination within and between systems makes accessing workforce services unmanageable</b></p>	<p>To receive the needed services from the over 130 workforce service providers in Memphis, individuals must navigate unwieldy and inefficient systems that frequently require working with multiple organizations across multiple sites.</p>
 <p><b>Insufficient supports are available to help people align their professional aptitudes with living-wage career pathways</b></p>	<p>7 in 10 industry credentials earned by Tennessee K-12 students do not enhance employment outcomes. Limited resources exist to help identify professional aptitudes, match them with living-wage jobs, and prepare for these careers.</p>
 <p><b>The prevalence of workers who have experienced trauma requires work environments that provide evidence-based supports</b></p>	<p>Over 110,000 adults in Shelby County have had four or more traumatic childhood experiences, increasing the probability of negative social and health outcomes as adults. This makes trauma-informed practices critical to career success.</p>



## Employment Roadblocks Summary

ROADBLOCK	DESCRIPTION
 <p><b>High costs and lack of proximity to quality childcare inhibit employment options and hours</b></p>	<p>55 percent of working parents in Shelby County have experienced employment disruptions due to inadequate childcare. Underserved neighborhoods do not have sufficient cost-effective providers that provide quality early learning.</p>
 <p><b>Unreliable transportation limits access to employment and training opportunities</b></p>	<p>Only 3 in 100 people experiencing poverty live near public transit that runs every 15 minutes. Memphis' low population density makes reliable private transportation necessary to access workforce services and living-wage employers.</p>
 <p><b>Chronic and untreated health conditions can reduce participation and persistence in training and job opportunities</b></p>	<p>1 in 2 adult Tennesseans earning less than \$15,000 live with arthritis while 1 in 4 have diabetes. Underserved neighborhoods have few primary care providers, increasing the probability of health complications that make consistent employment difficult.</p>
 <p><b>The prevalence of basic needs instability undermines workforce development participation</b></p>	<p>Nearly 1 in 5 Memphians are food insecure while over 30,000 eviction filings occur annually. Food insecurity and unstable housing arrangements make it nearly impossible to pursue workforce development services and employment.</p>
 <p><b>Uncoordinated policies and practices can result in career progression leading to greater financial vulnerability</b></p>	<p>\$1-\$2 per hour pay increases that exceed government benefits eligibility can leave individuals more vulnerable. Career progression is disincentivized when increases in compensation are less than the value of the lost government benefits.</p>
 <p><b>Involvement with the criminal legal system can impose overwhelming barriers to achieving economic stability</b></p>	<p>Twice as many people per capita are incarcerated in Shelby County compared to the national average. For those people, support overcoming obstacles to secure stable housing, transportation, and skills development can dramatically improve employment outcomes.</p>



## Insufficient math and literacy proficiency impede entry to and success in technical training

An estimated 100,000 Memphians experiencing poverty are in need of academic remediation to access career & technical education that can unlock living-wage jobs.



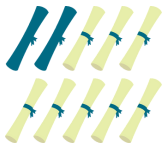
60 percent of people experiencing poverty are in need of academic remediation



25 percent of people experiencing poverty **lack a high school diploma** or equivalent



Over 90 percent of first-time freshmen at Southwest Tennessee Community College **qualified for learning support**



2 out of every 10 high school freshmen **do not receive a diploma** within 4 years



**Lack of education/training** was the second highest obstacle to employment cited in a survey of TANF recipients conducted by the University of Memphis (GROWWTH)

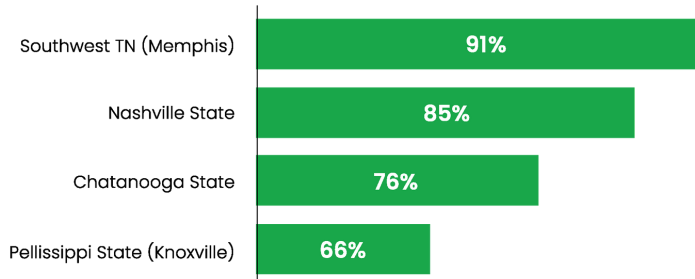


**80 percent** of high school graduates **do not demonstrate readiness** for postsecondary education and/or a career



**Less than 15 organizations** in Memphis have been identified that enable adults to earn a high school diploma or equivalent

## Percent of community college freshmen who qualified for learning support (2016 cohort)



"Many of Tech901's initial high school-educated students struggled to grasp the essential technical concepts necessary for entry-level Information Technology positions. Through testing, it was revealed that a considerable number of these students possessed only a sixth-grade level of proficiency in verbal and mathematical literacy."

– Robert Montague, Executive Director



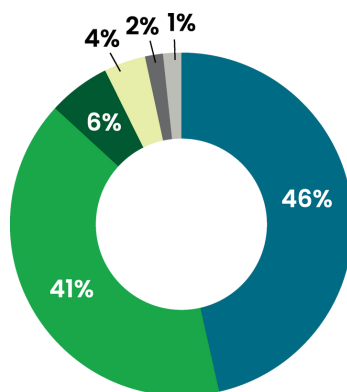
## The lack of resources and support allow seemingly insignificant factors to derail the completion of career & technical education programs

6 in 10 Tennessee community college students experiencing poverty do not continue after the first year. Numerous compounding factors, such as incidental life expenses and inefficient enrollment processes, can undermine program completion.

### Most common incidental financial barriers

Pilot conducted in East Tennessee (2022)

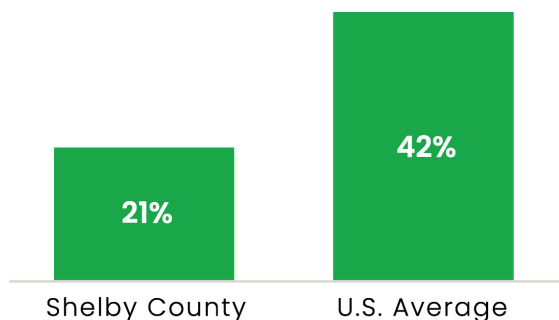
- Transportation
- Groceries
- Computer/Tech
- Books/Fees
- Supplies/Tools
- Rent/Utilities



Transportation, groceries, and technology are the most common incidental financial barriers for community college students observed during a pilot in East Tennessee

### Six-year community college graduation rates

2015 cohort



Only 4 in 10 students experiencing poverty **continue community college after the first year**



**1 in 4 students lost TN Reconnect funding** because they did not maintain a program requirement, and of those students 60 percent did not continue their program



The second most common reason students lost TN Reconnect eligibility is they were **unaware of the requirement** to refile an annual application



**Half as many students** from the 2015 cohort graduated from the local community college as compared to the national average



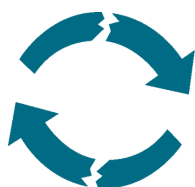
**Only 2 in 10 community college students** from the 2015 cohort in Shelby County **graduated within six years**, compared to 3 in 10 for Davidson County and 4 in 10 for Knox County



**THE COLLECTIVE**  
BLUEPRINT

"Students find out on a Thursday afternoon that they need to turn in additional tax documents by 5:00 pm the following day, leaving no time to request documents from the IRS or locate tax information before they are purged from the roster."





## Limited coordination within and between systems makes accessing workforce services unmanageable

To receive the needed services from the over 130 workforce service providers in Memphis, individuals must navigate unwieldy and inefficient systems that frequently require working with multiple organizations across multiple sites

Number of people experiencing poverty per workforce service provider



The 10 zip codes with the highest rates of poverty average 2,450 people experiencing poverty per workforce service provider, 40 percent more than the Shelby County average

**70k+**

Over 70,000 Memphians between the working ages of **18-65 years old live in or near poverty**



**More than 130 organizations** across Shelby County provide at least one type of workforce development service



7 out of 10 workforce service providers are **located in zip codes with an average annual income that exceeds \$50,000**



Federal funds for workforce training are not easy to access, as evidenced by eligible providers enrolling **an average of only three voucher-funded learners per year**



**No zip code** has providers that collectively offer all types of workforce services, with only 75 percent of workforce services, on average, accessible within each of the 10 zip codes with the highest rates of poverty



Academic remediation services are offered in **only one-third of the zip codes** in the Memphis metropolitan area



Only 12 percent of workforce providers offer services that help **match aptitudes and skills** with applicable jobs or help people experiencing poverty **retain jobs**

Common challenges to access workforce services  
TANF Service Providers

Distance to and from service providers
Scheduling appointments
Childcare at or near service provider
Childcare during 2nd and 3rd shift hours
Childcare benefits not being available for job training programs

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**"Service providers spoke of the difficulty their clients had with going to a job that was in an entirely different part of the county from where they lived, going to [required] volunteer assignments in another area, and transporting children to yet another part of the county for childcare, with schedules that may or may not line up with one another."**

- Focus group with TANF service providers

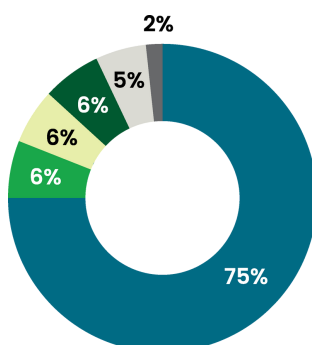
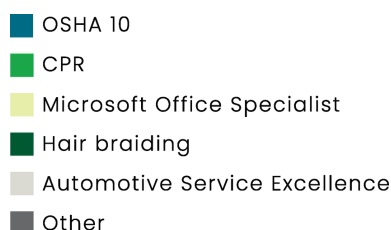


## Insufficient supports are available to help people align their professional aptitudes with living-wage career pathways

7 in 10 industry credentials earned by Tennessee K-12 students do not enhance employment outcomes. Limited resources exist to help identify professional aptitudes, match them with living-wage jobs, and prepare for these careers

### Industry credentials earned by Memphis K-12 students

As of March, 2021-2022 academic year



In Memphis, 75 percent of industry credentials earned by K-12 students as of March of the 2021-2022 academic year were OSHA 10, a 10-hour course covering basic safety and health hazards for entry-level workers



Only 30 percent of industry credentials earned by Tennessee K-12 students are associated with **jobs that pay \$15 per hour or more**



A **lack of awareness about available jobs, requirements, and salaries** was identified as the most significant challenge to growing the local construction workforce



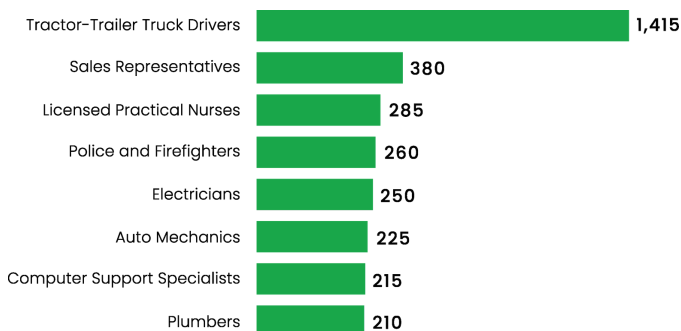
Career & technical education in Tennessee is managed separately for K-12 and postsecondary education, resulting in **limited to no alignment between systems**



Fewer opportunities exist to pursue one- or two-year certificate or associate degree programs in Memphis as only 40 percent of **postsecondary programs are non-bachelor** compared to 60 percent nationally

### Average annual openings for non-supervisor jobs available without a bachelor's degree

Greater Memphis (2016-2026)



A local Information Technology training provider found **most enrollees were changing careers or academic programs**, as 45 percent had a bachelor's degree and 83 percent had attended at least some college



Junior Achievement<sup>™</sup>  
of Memphis and the Mid-South

"Every child deserves to be world ready. If we truly believe in our children, we must help them discover the tools to succeed in today's economy and build a life of choice by finding a career, not just a job."

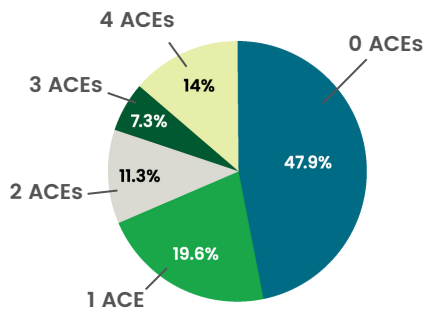
- Leigh Mansberg, President & CEO



## The prevalence of people who have experienced trauma requires work environments that provide evidence-based supports

Over 110,000 people in Shelby County have had four or more traumatic childhood experiences, increasing the probability of negative employment outcomes as adults. This makes trauma-informed practices critical to career success.

### Prevalence of adverse childhood experiences *State of Tennessee (2012)*



Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) are traumatic events, such as physical and emotional abuse, neglect, caregiver mental illness, and household violence



A strong correlation exists between the number of ACEs experienced and the **probability of several negative life outcomes**



Over half of adults in Shelby County (360,000) have experienced at least one ACE, with **at least 12 percent experiencing four or more ACEs**



A person with four or more ACEs is **over twice as likely to earn less than \$10,000** and nearly 2.5x more likely to be out of work than a person who did not experience ACEs



The most prevalent ACEs in Shelby County are **substance abuse, emotional abuse, and violence** between adults in the home

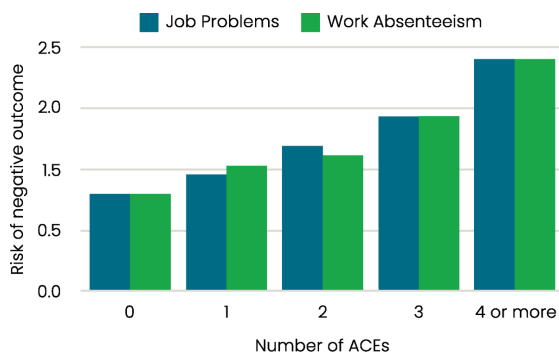


A person with four or more ACEs is nearly **2.5x more likely to experience job problems** such as absenteeism or job performance challenges than a person who did not experience ACEs



1 in 5 adults in Shelby County (140,000) were **sexually abused as children**

### Impact of Adverse Childhood Experiences on employment



**"Children growing up with toxic stress [from ACEs] may have difficulty forming healthy and stable relationships. They may also have unstable work histories as adults and struggle with finances, jobs, and depression throughout life."**



## High costs and lack of proximity to quality childcare inhibit employment options and hours

55 percent of working parents in Shelby County have experienced employment challenges due to inadequate childcare. Obstacles accessing cost-effective childcare that provides quality early learning limits workforce development and employment opportunities.

Due to childcare issues, more than 1 in 3 working parents in Shelby County worked less hours, could not work more hours, turned down a job offer or promotion, or quit or were fired in the first half of 2022

### Prevalence of employment challenges due to childcare experienced by working parents Shelby County, First half of 2022

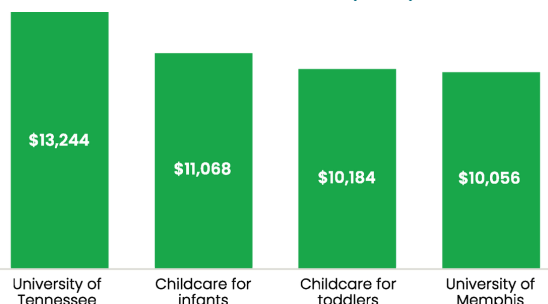


The most significant obstacles to securing childcare cited by working parents in Shelby County are **ACCESS, AFFORDABILITY, & QUALITY**



Annual childcare costs in Shelby County are **equivalent to tuition for state universities**

### Comparison of annual cost of tuition for state colleges and local childcare Center-based care (2022)



Over half of all working parents in Shelby County reported **challenges with employment** retention or career advancement due to inadequate childcare



TANF recipients in West Tennessee identified the lack of childcare as the **biggest obstacle to employment**

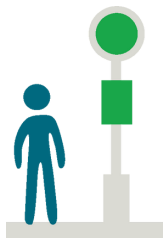


Less than 1 in 10 Shelby County parents are accessing government-funded **financial aid for childcare**



"We can't unlock Memphis' full economic potential until quality childcare becomes more accessible. The challenges working parents face in finding and affording quality childcare significantly impact their ability to earn a living and in turn also dampen business growth"

- Blair Taylor, President & CEO

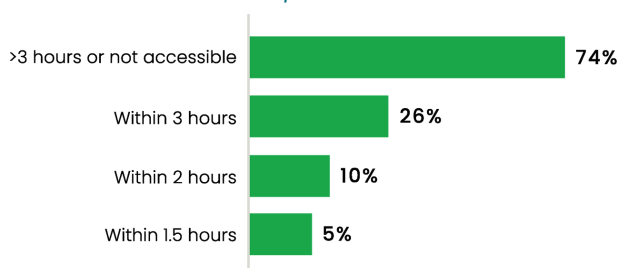


## Unreliable transportation limits access to employment and training opportunities

Only 3 in 100 people experiencing poverty live near public transit that runs every 15 minutes. Memphis' low population density makes reliable private transportation necessary to access workforce services and living-wage employers.

### Percent of jobs in Memphis accessible by public transit

Round-trip travel times



**74 percent of jobs in Memphis are not accessible via public transit within a 3-hour round trip**



**Memphis ranks nearly last** (41 of 42) among large urban areas for transit use per capita, with only 2 percent of Memphians taking transit to work

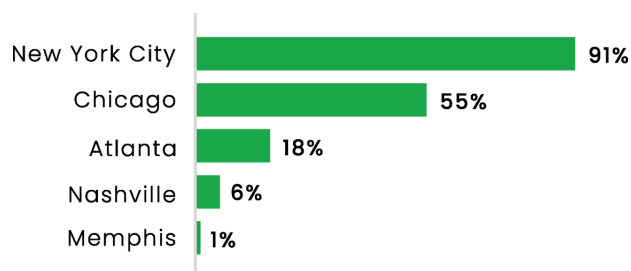


**170,000 fewer people** live within the City of Memphis boundaries compared to 1970



**Only 1 percent of Memphis' neighborhoods** are considered location efficient, i.e., compact, close to jobs and services, and with a variety of transportation choices

### Percent of neighborhoods that are considered location efficient for transportation



Just 3 percent of Memphians experiencing poverty (4,000 people) **live near bus services** that run at least every 15 minutes



Over half of Memphis Area Transit Authority riders live in households **without access to an automobile**, while 1 in 4 live in households with access to only one vehicle

**<60%**

Memphians experiencing poverty work closer to home, with an **average travel time to work** that is 60 percent less than those who live above a living wage



Average annual transportation costs per household in Memphis are \$12,688, **nearly 75 percent more than in New York City**

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**"Public transportation is unreliable in Memphis and nonexistent outside Memphis. General car maintenance, as well as car repairs, make it difficult to keep reliable personal transportation as an option for families."**

- Focus group with nonprofit employees

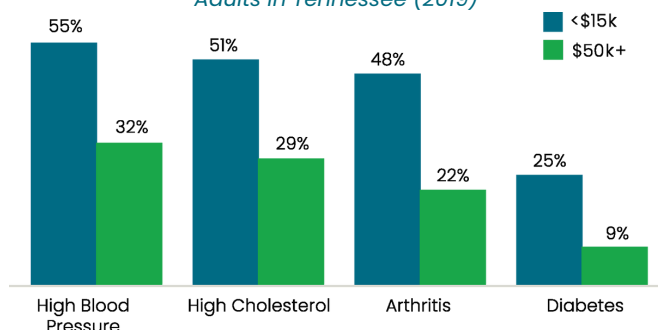


## Chronic and untreated health conditions can reduce participation and persistence in training and job opportunities

1 in 2 adult Tennesseans earning less than \$15,000 live with arthritis while 1 in 4 have diabetes. Underserved neighborhoods have few primary care providers, increasing the probability of health complications that make consistent employment difficult.

People in Tennessee earning less than \$15,000 per year deal with chronic health conditions at nearly twice the rates of those earning \$50,000 or more

Prevalence of chronic health conditions by income level  
Adults in Tennessee (2019)



Davidson County has **nearly 2.5x as many healthcare providers** per TennCare recipient as Shelby County



Shelby County has **less than half as many mental health providers** per adult than Davidson County



Over 40 percent of Memphis' primary health **clinics are located along the Poplar Avenue corridor**, limiting access for those in neighborhoods not located in that corridor

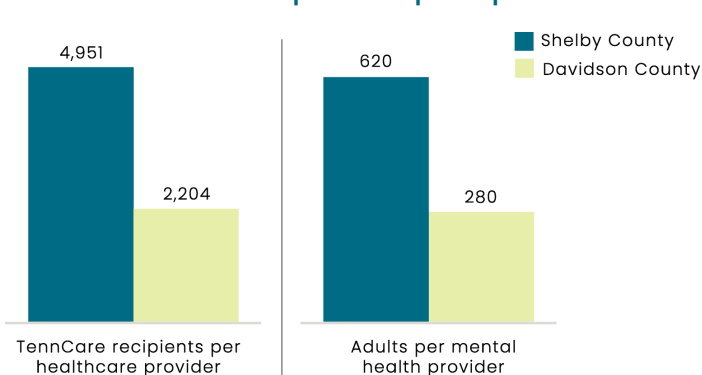


The five most prevalent chronic health conditions in Shelby County each **impact nearly 100,000 people or more**: high blood pressure (269,000), obesity (258,000), high cholesterol (210,000), arthritis (181,000), and diabetes (95,000)



Crisis services responded to **1.5x more mental health emergencies** in Shelby County than Davidson County in 2022

Healthcare providers per capita



"Low incomes limit access to healthcare and hinder healthy lifestyles. Only 15% of a person's health is determined by the care they receive, while 60% is determined by the environment in which they live, work, and play due to social risk factors such as food, shelter, safety, and transportation insecurities, all of which are exacerbated by poverty."

— Pedro Velasquez, Executive Director



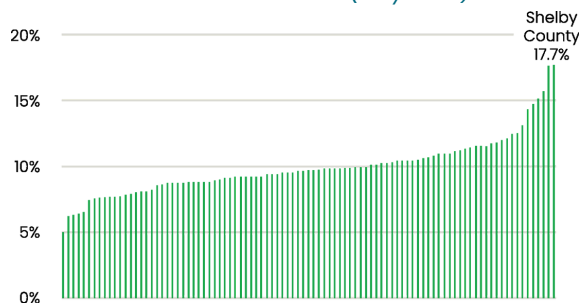


## The lack of basic needs stability undermines workforce development participation

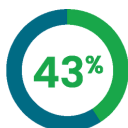
Nearly 1 in 5 Memphians are food insecure and over 30,000 eviction filings occur annually. Food insecurity and unstable housing arrangements make it nearly impossible to pursue workforce development services, education, and employment.

**Almost 20 percent of households in Shelby County struggle with severe housing cost burden, spending 50+ percent of their income on housing, which is the highest rate for any county in Tennessee and 1.5x the state average**

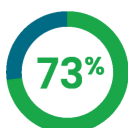
Percent of households that spend 50 percent or more of income on housing  
Counties in Tennessee (May 2023)



**Nearly 250,000 people experience food insecurity** in the Memphis metropolitan area, i.e., lack of consistent access to enough food to live a healthy life

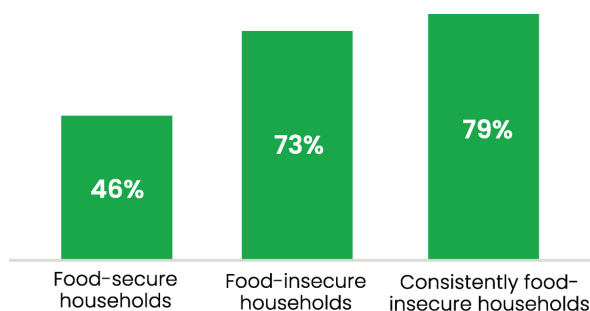


Food-insecure students are more than **40 percent less likely to graduate** from college



A study found **food-insecure households experienced job disruptions** during COVID-19 at 1.6x the rate of food-secure households (73 percent versus 46 percent)

Percent of food-insecure households that experienced job disruptions  
COVID-19, March 2020 to March 2021



An average of 31,633 evictions in Shelby County were filed annually between 2016 and 2019, with **more than 20% of renters facing eviction**



Following a forced move due to eviction, landlord foreclosure, or housing condemnation, low-wage workers are **11 to 22 percentage points more likely to be laid off**

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**“Waiting lists are extremely long for even modest [housing] assistance, and if assistance is refused for a variety of reasons then applicants lose their place and are placed at the end of the waiting list again.**

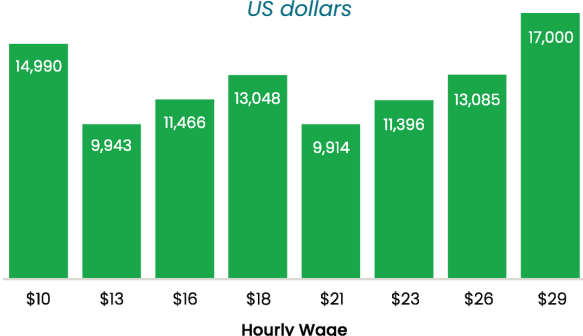
- Focus groups, TANF recipients and nonprofit employees



## Uncoordinated policies and practices can create greater financial vulnerability despite career progression

\$1-\$2 per hour pay increases that exceed government benefits eligibility can leave individuals more vulnerable. Career progression is disincentivized when increases in compensation are less than the value of the lost government benefits.

Estimated annual net resources as income from employment increases  
US dollars



For a single parent raising two children, estimated annual net resources only exceeds those at \$10 per hour (\$20,000 annual income) when wages of \$29 per hour are reached (\$55,000 annual income)



1 in 5 Shelby County residents receive nutrition support through SNAP, with an average benefit of \$401 per household with children



Shelby County has the **largest share of Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) cases** in Tennessee (19 percent, nearly triple the next highest county), with the average benefit being \$382 per month for a participating family



Over 25,000 Memphis residents receive rent assistance, with the average monthly subsidy being \$700 per household



85 percent of Tennessee TANF recipients surveyed said they had been **impacted by the benefits cliff**



For a single parent raising two children, **annual net resources decline** from an estimated \$15,000 to \$10,000 with a \$2 per hour increase from \$10 to \$12 per hour

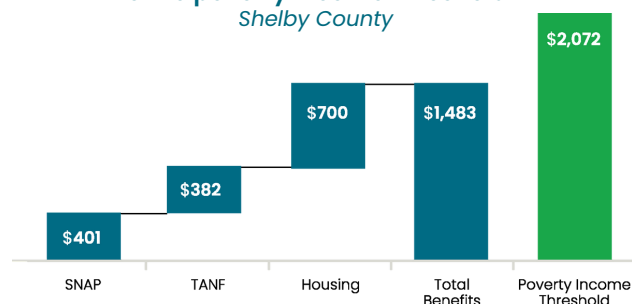


Single parents with two children are **most at risk** of experiencing a benefits cliff



The **largest benefit cliffs** are associated with the loss of childcare and housing subsidies

Average monthly government benefits compared to the poverty income threshold  
Shelby County



"I've actually turned down a management job before, because I was going to be working more hours, so my rent was going to go up and I was going to be paying more childcare."

-Tennessee TANF recipient

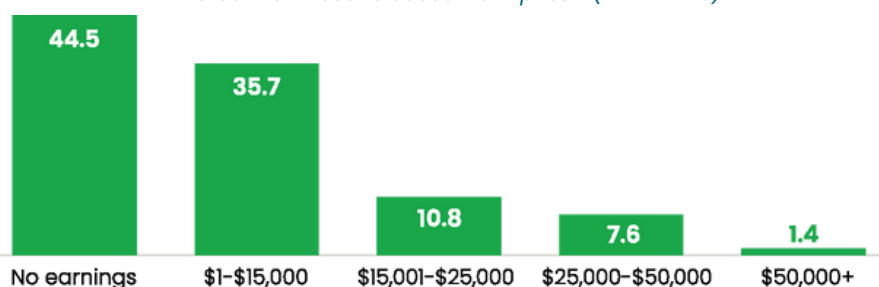


## Involvement with the criminal legal system can impose overwhelming barriers to achieving economic stability

Twice as many people per capita are incarcerated in Shelby County compared to the national average. For those people, support overcoming obstacles to secure stable housing, transportation, and skills development can dramatically improve employment outcomes.

### Income earned the first full calendar year after incarceration

Percent of those released from prison (2009–2013)



80 percent of people who reenter from the criminal legal system earned less than \$15,000 the first year after reentry, with 45 percent reporting no earnings at all

# 3x

Rates of incarceration have more than tripled in Shelby County since 1985 and is estimated to be 95 percent higher than the national average



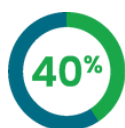
Only 55 percent of people formerly incarcerated in the U.S. reported **having any earnings in the first year after reentry**, with median earnings being only \$10,090



Common barriers include legal debt (bail, court fees, etc.), revoked driver's licenses from unpaid debts, housing application rejections, and business practices that **limit job options**



8 out of 10 people reported having **landlords summarily reject their applications** because of their criminal records

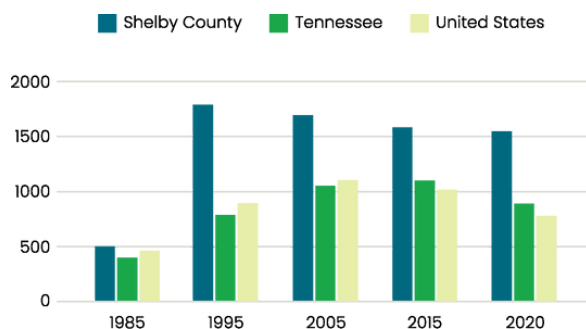


40 percent of annual Tennessee state prison entries are for **violating community supervision requirements** (e.g., probation, parole), similar to all drug and violent offenses combined.



Nearly half of Tennesseans with a felony conviction have **returned to prison within three years**. Across the country, this rate increases to 79 percent after five years.

### Number of people incarcerated per 100,000 residents ages 15 to 64



THE SYCAMORE INSTITUTE

“...someone reentering society from incarceration with unpaid debts and revoked driver's license may have more trouble securing a job, housing, and financial stability—all associated with reduced recidivism. Unintended consequences like these can play out in a number of ways.”