Comparing Davidson County Poverty

MSS recently received a request from a community leader about how Davidson County’s poverty compares with the two largest cities in the U.S., New York City and Los Angeles.

Davidson County's poverty in 2014 (latest data available) was higher than three of New York City's five boroughs.

Davidson County's poverty in 2014 was higher than all five of the counties in the Greater Los Angeles area.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2014 Poverty Rate for All People</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Counties in New York City, NY; Davidson County, TN</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bronx County</th>
<th>Kings County</th>
<th>New York County</th>
<th>Queens County</th>
<th>Richmond County</th>
<th>Davidson County, TN</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>29.6%</td>
<td>23.2%</td>
<td>17.7%</td>
<td>15.0%</td>
<td>11.9%</td>
<td>19.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Happy Thanksgiving!

In the fall of 1621, Pilgrims in Plymouth Colony held a 3-day feast celebrating their bountiful harvest.

In 1863, Thanksgiving was declared a national holiday by President Abraham Lincoln. At that time it was on the last Thursday, later changed by the fourth Thursday by President Franklin Roosevelt.
Tracking Local Indicators

In recent years, a number of local governments began to track quality of life indicators for their cities, counties and neighborhoods. By measuring these social justice indicators, public policy can be developed to promote fairness, justice and equity. As the available data increases, it is now possible to measure many quality of life indicators to demonstrate changes over time.

The National Neighborhood Indicators Partnership encourages local government and community leaders to use their data to build the capacities of institutions and residents in distressed urban neighborhoods.

Over time, several cities and counties have developed extensive social equity measures (that include economic equity, social justice and how burdens and benefits of policy actions are distributed across a community) that helps them know which communities have the most urgent needs.

One example, King County, Washington, recognized "staggering inequity across King County" and created an Equity and Social Justice initiative. This initiative has become part of King County's vision for transforming Health & Human Services by building equity in the community, working in new ways and investing in what works. Other examples include: Baltimore Neighborhood Indicators Alliance Spartanburg Community Indicators Project Boston Indicators Project

New Resource Guides Available

Free and Low-Cost Health Care provides a listing of organizations that provide no or low-cost health care for Davidson County residents. Parent-Child Crisis and Prevention Resource List includes a variety of agencies that work with families in crisis.

These resource guides are provided by Metropolitan Social Services as a service to the community. For additional information about these guides, please contact Joyce Hillman, 615-862-6439.

Poverty Shrinks Brains

In recent years, neuroscience has demonstrated the negative effects that poverty has on children's brains, described in Poverty Shrinks Brains from Birth (Nature-International Weekly Journal of Science, March 2015).

Scientific research has found what has been long suspected: the behavior and cognitive capacity of children is related to the income levels of their families. Children from low-income families were often affected with impaired language and decision making skills, as well as test scores for reading and memory. The specific impact on children varies with the age at which adversity (including poverty) occurs.
The Community Indicators Consortium notes that community indicators help to improve the quality of life for their residents by measuring what is important to the community. It notes that, "Without indicators, it is difficult to know whether progress is being made on important issues. Those metrics provide essential guidance for action and key tools for appropriate engagement of the public."

Pipeline to Prison Begins Early

An article from Moyers & Company, *The School-to-Prison Pipeline Starts in Preschool*, summarizes the nationwide findings which show that 4-5 year old black preschoolers comprise almost half of all out-of-school suspensions for preschoolers.

By labeling these young children as disruptive and deserving of punishment interferes with their education and socialization at a very formative stage. (The Black or African American population is 12.5% for the U.S., according to the 2014 American Community Survey from the U.S. Census Bureau.)

Across all grade levels, black students represent about 16% of the student population, compared to the 32-42% receiving out-of-school suspension. They also represent 27% of those referred to law enforcement and 31% of students who are arrested for a school violation. The suspension rate for black students is three times higher than for white students.

On March 21, 2014, the U.S. Department of Education’s Office for Civil Rights released *Data Snapshot: School Discipline*, which detailed gender and racial disparities in School Discipline, Restraint and Seclusion. It noted that while 18% of preschoolers were black, they represented 48% of out-of-school suspension. Of preschool enrollment, 43% were white but represented 26% of those receiving one out-of-school suspension.

Data Snapshot described a pattern of greater suspension and expulsion rates for students of color, girls of color, students with disabilities and English language learners. In addition, among students placed in restraint and/or seclusion, students with disabilities represented 58%, although they were only 16% of enrollment.

There are specific ways to mitigate the effects on low-income children. Children in families with income less than $25,000 were 6% smaller than those from families with incomes of $150,000.

School Suspensions by Race in Davidson County

Chapter 2 of the *Educational Service Delivery Audit Report* of Metropolitan Nashville Public Schools (page 2-56-57) indicated that there were 6,806 in-school suspensions for Black or African American students, compared to 2,011 for White students for the school year 2013-2014.

Out-of-school suspensions were reported as 5,157 for Black or African American students and 1,289 for White students during that same school year.

The report also notes that the largest racial category was Black or African American at 45.0% in 2013-2014, compared to 33.3% for White students, or a difference of 11.7%.

PASSAGE Initiative

*Breaking the Cycle of Inequitable School Discipline through Community and Civic Collaboration in Nashville* describes work underway through MNPS and Oasis Center. The Annenberg Institute for School Reform at Brown University invited MNPS to participate in its Positive and Safe Schools Advancing Greater Equity (PASSAGE) initiative. It is a multi-stakeholder effort, involving community organizations, parents and students to tackle inequitable disciplinary practices.