



COMMUNITY NEEDS EVALUATION

The State of Wellbeing - 2020

NASHVILLE and DAVIDSON COUNTY



METROPOLITAN SOCIAL SERVICES
Strategic Planning and Research



METROPOLITAN GOVERNMENT OF NASHVILLE AND DAVIDSON COUNTY

JOHN COOPER
MAYOR

OFFICE OF THE MAYOR
METROPOLITAN COURTHOUSE
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April 9, 2020

Dear Friends,

It is a pleasure for me to present the 2020 Community Needs Evaluation.

Last year was one of the most challenging years in Nashville's history. The COVID-19 pandemic has claimed the lives of over 850 Nashvillians. The pandemic – and the economic downturn that it caused – exacerbated other problems too. Even before the pandemic, Nashville faced serious challenges. The unemployment rate for African-American residents of Davidson County is twice as high as the unemployment rate for whites. Our economic mobility rate is low. We faced acute health needs around diabetes and opioid addiction.

The pandemic exacerbated these problems. Nashville-Davidson County suffered the largest decrease in jobs in recorded history. Unemployment surged to a high of 15.9 percent. The death toll of the opioid epidemic has continued to climb, and loneliness and social isolation are at record highs. The full human costs of COVID-19 have not yet been tallied. But we know they will be high.

None of us will ever forget this past year. But Nashville is a resilient city. We have great strengths to build on. Before the pandemic hit, Nashville's poverty rate was falling. Inequality was declining. Between 2013 and 2018, median incomes had risen by 23 percent. Nashville had the lowest unemployment rate of any big city in the country and the second highest rate of labor force growth.

The strengths that made such progress possible remain. In the administration of President Joe Biden, Nashville now has a federal partner willing to invest in economic development, health, housing, infrastructure, community safety, and sustainability. What is required now is a sustained and strategic effort. Metro also has a clear role to play. Some 41,000 Nashville residents lack a high school diploma. The result is that far too many residents work jobs that pay far less than the living wage. Nearly 39,000 Nashvillians work full-time jobs paying less than \$12 an hour. Yet a living wage for residents with children in Nashville-Davidson County is \$22.87 an hour. Increasing average wages in Nashville will require sustained investments in education and workforce opportunity – investments that I will work with the Metro Council to make, along with additional investments in community safety, housing, transportation, and infrastructure.

By focusing community attention on employment, education, housing, health, transportation, and other trends, the Community Needs Evaluation helps us understand all the factors that affect our neighbors' well-being. I appreciate the work that Metropolitan Social Services has done to make this report possible. Even more important is the work that we will do together in the years ahead.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "John Cooper", is positioned below the word "Sincerely,".

John Cooper
Mayor

JOHN COOPER
MAYOR

RENEE PRATT
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

METROPOLITAN GOVERNMENT OF NASHVILLE AND DAVIDSON COUNTY



METROPOLITAN SOCIAL SERVICES
800 2ND AVENUE NORTH, SUITE 100
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As Chair of the Metropolitan Social Service Commission, it gives me great pleasure to present the 2020 *Community Needs Evaluation* and to maintain the tradition of serving the community with key research on emerging issues and trends impacting the economic life of Nashville residents. In continuously fulfilling an important aspect of its charter mission, Metropolitan Social Services develops this important report as a tool to be used to better the lives of Nashvillians and to advance their economic and social wellbeing.

This report continues to offer insightful data on population change, income and earnings, occupations and industries, education, housing, health, hunger, and other topics related to the state of wellbeing. The pandemic year of 2020 brought a new imperative to considering these issues, while reflecting on the challenges that many minorities households face in making ends meet. These conditions require evaluation in the context of equity lenses that involve patterns of enduring historical economic exclusion policies. The continuation and legacy of these struggles to build wealth contribute to multi-generational poverty and severe lack of economic mobility for many.

Through this analysis and report, Metropolitan Social Services welcomes the community to engage with these findings, observations, and recommendations, as well as to offer input and suggestion for additional topics that shed light on the issue of wellbeing in Nashville.

Charlotte Peacock

JOHN COOPER
MAYOR

RENEE PRATT
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

METROPOLITAN GOVERNMENT OF NASHVILLE AND DAVIDSON COUNTY



METROPOLITAN SOCIAL SERVICES
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Metropolitan Social Services is pleased to present the 12th annual *Community Needs Evaluation: The State of Wellbeing*.

This report continues to explore those issues and trends which are most serious and pressing throughout the community. Typically, the causes and outcomes of gaps in wellbeing are interconnected. The report documents the major events of 2020 during which occurred not merely the start to a new decade, a decennial Census, and an election, but also a serious pandemic, a devastating tornado, a severe economic downturn and social justice demonstrations. Throughout the year, city leadership responded with action that mobilized public and private resources to ensure preserving the health of vulnerable populations, rebuilding communities, and support for workers in impacted industries.

In the context of these challenging events, Nashville continues to record economic growth. Still, education, childcare, reliable transportation, and savings are luxuries out of reach for many. Many Nashvillians encounter great difficulty in buying homes or paying rent at levels that meet their ability to pay based on household income. A variety of factors contribute to household ability to make ends meet in their budget – neighborhood characteristics, race and ethnicity, policies that shape the local economy and job market, proximity to gainful employment, and numerous others. Despite long-term efforts to meet the needs of those in poverty, many Nashville households find their economic situation worsening over time. Returning to normality for many still means a life where financial struggle and social inequities are part of daily life since poverty is a stark reality for one in six Nashvillians.

Since complex systemic issues have weakened the ability of many to experience favorable economic and social wellbeing, a different focus on those issues is important. In short, systemic challenges require systemic solutions in land use policy, business recruitment, and jobs that provide benefits. Collective efforts can transform the root causes of economic hardship and create pathways to sustainable economic mobility. This report calls for new direction, such as the creation of a Wellbeing Cabinet among other things, to recalibrate local decisions that have an enormous influence on wellbeing. Metropolitan Social Services invites community leaders, elected officials, funders, service providers and others to engage in these important conversations.



COMMUNITY NEEDS EVALUATION The State of Wellbeing - 2020

NASHVILLE and DAVIDSON COUNTY



METROPOLITAN SOCIAL SERVICES
Strategic Planning and Research

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

2020 WAS A YEAR OF CHALLENGES. Not merely a start to a new decade, the decennial Census, and an election, Nashville has faced a serious pandemic, a devastating tornado, a severe economic downturn and social justice demonstrations. Even the financial hardship that many faced in 2019 and earlier are brought to new reality. This report continues to explore those issues and trends which are most serious and pressing throughout the community. Typically, the causes and outcomes of gaps in wellbeing are interconnected. Whether the experience is one of deep poverty or struggle for many working households to make ends meet, the issues of work, health, food, education, housing, land use, safety, and transportation are linked to one another.

Economic wellbeing represents a state of present and future financial security, including having control over household day-to-day finances and the ability to absorb financial shocks, to meet financial goals, to build financial assets, and to maintain adequate income throughout the lifespan. Wellbeing thrives within a context of economic justice where labor markets provide opportunities for secure full employment with adequate compensation and benefits for all.

The population of Davidson County continues to grow and in 2019 it reached 694,144, **an increase of 67,463 or 11%** since 2010. In total, 94,396 Nashvillians are foreign-born. During this period, Nashville, like many major U.S. cities, experienced rapid economic growth and change. However, this growth did not produce equitable prosperity for many neighborhoods. Nashville's poverty rate remained high throughout the 2010s despite high levels of development and job increase. In 2019, the rate was 12.4% overall but major disparities persisted by race, ethnicity, household composition and among children in

Davidson County. Nashville consistently experienced poverty rates higher than many comparable U.S. cities.

The devastating economic consequences of 2020 resulted in further widespread increase in those already challenged to make ends meet. Many working-class households lapsed into economic hardship that likely will have long-lasting consequences. The pandemic resulted in income losses for workers in industries impacted, such as hospitality and leisure, retail and many service sectors.

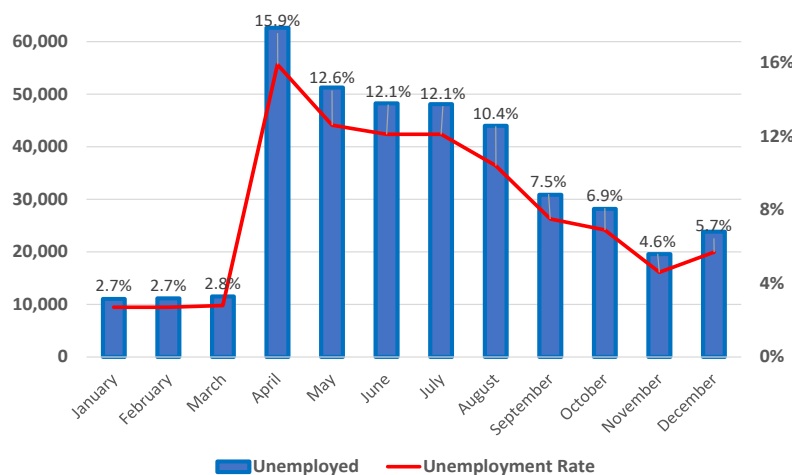
**Addressing poverty
and wellbeing requires
a unified effort.
Every element of
household life
connects to all others.
Aligning approaches to
build meaningful opportunity
involves innovation
and commitment
to real, sustained change.
All of society pays the price
- directly and indirectly - for
those that experience
inadequate social
and economic
wellbeing.**

THE STATE OF WELLBEING

Economic Mobility Relies on Labor Market Alignment

Economic mobility plays an essential role in advancing wellbeing across generations. A key aspect of economic wellbeing is the role of employment and earnings. Yet, not all job markets provide the same opportunities for persons with specific skills. The comparatively low levels of unemployment in the period preceding 2020 in some ways disguise the quality of jobs in the Nashville market. Many individuals spend their working lives in the very large low-wage economy of Davidson County. While economic mobility is notoriously low for Nashville and efforts are needed to spur greater mobility patterns, it is unreasonable to expect all lower-earning workers to simply move to higher earning roles. The conundrum facing many economies is the challenge of many low-wage jobs that themselves will remain and need to be filled. Further, the gaps between these many low-skill jobs and other high-skill jobs are very large, often ones that have enduringly difficult barriers for many individuals and families within existing social and economic circumstances.

Unemployment Davidson County 2020



Source: Tennessee Department of Labor and Workforce Development

Poverty fundamentally relates to an economic threshold. In 2020, a family of four that is poor by federal government definition has an annual income below \$26,200. Yet, many households with higher earnings still live functionally in poverty situations. In Nashville, 38,708 workers with full-time jobs had **average wages under \$12 an hour**. Additionally, many that experience poverty are nonearners which include children, the elderly, persons with disabilities, adult students and caregivers.

Achieving economic security requires earning adequate income. Paychecks are the means to economic security for most households. The standard of living is determined by an ability to afford all the needs and aspirations unique to each family and individual. A variety of factors contribute to household ability to make ends meet in their budget- neighborhood characteristics, race and ethnicity, policies that shape the local economy and job market, proximity to gainful employment, and numerous others. While median household income in Davidson County was \$63,938 in 2019, an estimated 31.5% of Nashville households had **income below \$25,000 a year**. Half of Nashville earners in 2019 received \$38,041 or less.

12.4%

of all people in Davidson County live below poverty

83,113

Nashvillians that live in poverty

Nashville's poverty rate was **higher** than US average for **7 of past 9 years**

41.7%

Share of Nashville Region families that are struggling

The Brookings Institution

-8,169

Fewer workers in Davidson County in December 2020 than December 2019

38,708

Nashvillians work full-time jobs with average wages **under \$12 an hour**.

Number of Nashville cost burdened older homeowners **increased 21%** from 2010-2019.

American Community Survey

THE STATE OF WELLBEING

*A lack of wellbeing is manifested in
unaffordable housing, poor health, and hunger*

Education in the early years is critical as it provides opportunity for development and growth, pointing toward long-term success, which can include breaking the cycle of generational poverty. Poverty rates for high school graduates consistently are lower than those for people without a high school diploma and better education correlates with higher earnings for workers. However, education alone is not sufficient to overcome systemic poverty without a broader economic context for workers to thrive.

Over 41,000 Nashville adults lack a high school diploma

Only 1 in 5 MNPS students is ready to graduate with a regular high school diploma and meet milestones for postsecondary success.

Food security is at the center of human wellbeing. Lacking nutritious food increases risk of disease and poor health and less mental focus at work for adults and at school for children. Yet, the struggle for adequate food is real for many Nashvillians. Already a serious need for tens of thousands before the COVID pandemic, the loss of employment and income has added thousands more to a hungry Nashville.

12.4% Food Insecurity Rate in Davidson County population

About 1 in 6 persons in the U.S. has borrowed money from friends or family or has gotten food from a food bank.

Health vulnerability has been notable for those in financial distress during the COVID pandemic. Most affected by the impact of the pandemic have been people experiencing challenges such as low income or unstable employment, food insecurity, mental illness, disability, chronic health conditions, social isolation, caregiver stress, and intimate partner violence. Their need for support has increased, which has put financial pressure on the health and social supports in communities to meet increased need.

5th lowest life expectancy in Tennessee among 50 states in the U.S.

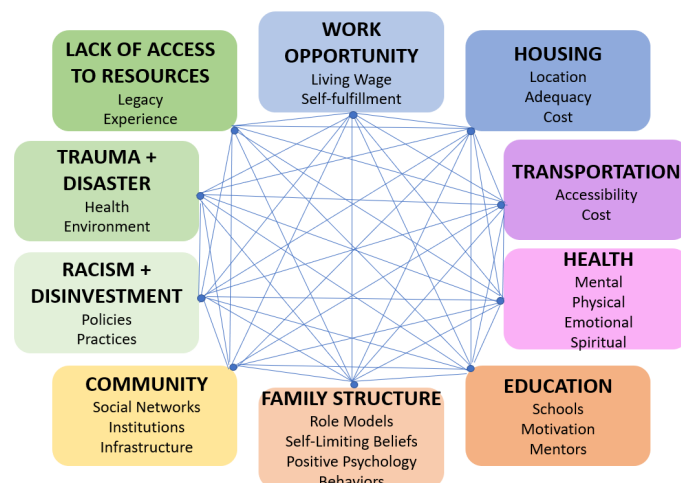
More than 1 in 10 Davidson County residents lacks health insurance

Housing difficulties are real for many Nashvillians that encounter house prices and rents at levels that do not meet their ability to pay based on household income. Policy decisions underlying the composition of industries and occupations of Davidson County have resulted in a 'two-tier' city where in-migration of population and high-wage jobs match well with newer, costlier housing while many in the existing population largely earn less and are priced out of housing.

19.5% of homeowners and **46.5%** of renters in Nashville spend more than 30% of their income for housing.

21% increase in number of cost-burdened older homeowners in Nashville from 2010 to 2019.

LANDSCAPE OF POVERTY INFLUENCERS & REINFORCERS



NEW DIRECTIONS

Nashville looks forward to the 2020s with renewed hope that life will gain a more predictable, manageable pattern. But, returning to normality for many still means a reality where financial struggle and social inequities are part of daily life. The work of a **Wellbeing Cabinet**, comprising key organizations and efforts in the public and non-profit sector, is the first step to understanding and then aligning activity that addresses social and economic wellbeing. The work of Metropolitan Social Services in research and analysis suggests the usefulness of a new approach, one that aims for systemic review and change, transformation and innovation in addressing wellbeing of the city's population.

Misunderstanding the concept of poverty hinders action. A perspective that only sees the symptoms of poverty inevitably will overlook the root causes of poverty. The manifestations of a condition are not the same as the reasons that the condition exists. Feeding a hungry person through charity does not change what forced the person to seek assistance. Diagnosing root causes of hunger, housing inadequacy, poor health, education and workforce talent gaps, and lack of access to childcare is essential to address structures that create and perpetuate these conditions.

A lack of continuity hinders action. Commitment to responsible analysis and reporting on the manner in which poverty occurs and persists can yield new, important insights. These insights can then inform continuous review, honest acknowledgement of causation of financial hardship, and action directed to these issues. Concern over wellbeing with no responsible owner leads to no meaningful solution; yet, poverty through diffused causation requires collective ownership for real results.

Economic and community development efforts not aligned with wellbeing priorities hinder action. Structuring an economy and labor force requires policy that can best shape opportunity for existing residents, rather than intensifying their displacement. Land use policy aligned with wellbeing will prioritize maintaining and improving neighborhoods over development interests that may erode equitable, inclusive outcomes. Continuously reinforcing lopsided labor market outcomes often do not deliver adequate income levels for broad community vitality and growing aggregate economic outputs.

Local decisions have enormous influence in advancing action for wellbeing. Land use policy, economic and workforce development priorities, transportation systems, zoning and permitting of businesses, and many other aspects of local governance are the vital factors that shape quality of life for local residents. Intentional approaches to this governance provide a coherent outcome for the population while policies that act in opposition to one another simply intensify costs and challenges. Development actions at the same time displace communities and homes, resulting in gentrification. Jobs with skill requirements unmatched to local talent do little to advance labor market opportunities for existing workers. Housing markets that are disrupted by opportunistic investors that make housing unaffordable do not occur in a vacuum -- they are determined by local decisions.

Accepting proven results and rejecting disproven approaches advance action. Failing to recognize harmful impacts of "trickle-down" economic policies on the population and persisting with false narratives of economic growth that is development-oriented rather than people-oriented simply erodes and stifles wellbeing for much of the population. The enduring belief that uncoordinated, unfocused, unmeasured growth will benefit everyone fails to leave room for needed investigation of new alternatives. Research that disproves failed approaches has resulted in meaningful criminal justice reform, rising concern over corporate welfare, and greater need for wellbeing of people as the ultimate metric of community success.

Creation of a Wellbeing Cabinet offers unique opportunity to advance action. Establishing a Wellbeing Cabinet can provide the first step in ownership of poverty and wellbeing, grounded in a well-established understanding of the root causes rather than their symptoms. This Cabinet can embody a culture of collaboration that involves many paths to address the complexities that shape human wellbeing in Nashville and to achieve positive collective impact. Through fostering a consensus direction with space for innovative approaches and expansive ideas, this relationship of intentionality can gain traction and provide gains far in excess of the 'sum of the parts.'

THE STATE OF WELLBEING

Time of Challenge and Resolve

2020 IS A YEAR OF CHALLENGES. Not merely a start to a new decade, the decennial Census, and an election, Nashville has faced a serious pandemic, a devastating tornado, a severe economic downturn and social justice demonstrations. Even the financial hardship that many faced in 2019 and earlier are brought to new reality.

Metropolitan Social Services is pleased to present the 12th annual *Community Needs Evaluation: The State of Wellbeing*. This report has provided a clear picture of the economic and social conditions of Nashville's population each year since 2008. During that time, the city has experienced the Great Recession, a massive flood, and now the events of 2020. In each edition of the report, data have shown impacts on the social and economic situation of Nashville residents, often highlighting areas of ongoing and emerging gaps in wellbeing.

This report continues to explore those issues and trends which are most serious and pressing

throughout the community. Typically, the causes and outcomes of gaps in wellbeing are interconnected. Whether the experience is one of deep poverty or struggle for many working households to make ends meet, the issues of work, health, food, education, housing, land use, safety, and transportation are linked to one another.

Yet, data alone do not reveal the human story that is the experience of many Nashvillians. In this report, examples of the human impact reveal those hardships that many face.

Even in a year of deep and daunting challenges, Nashville not only can look to data for gaps and deficiencies, but also can learn from research that addresses the ways that hardship is perpetuated and that it can be addressed. An essential priority is to embrace research that advances wellbeing in all its dimensions for the Nashville residents in all communities with all needs.

UNDERSTANDING THE DATA

Measuring Poverty

The official U.S. poverty measure was developed in 1963 and is based on the cost of the minimum food diet multiplied by three for various family sizes. Poverty Guidelines are determined by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and updated annually. Amounts are based on the number of persons in a family per household. For families or households with more than eight persons, \$4,480 is added for each additional person. Although the poverty level is updated annually, the methodology for determining poverty rate has seen little change since it was developed. For example, inflation year to year outpaces the change in the

poverty level year to year—the cost of goods increases while lower-income populations have a higher cost burden. For families or households with more than eight persons, \$4,480 is added for each additional person.

A Supplemental Poverty Measure (SPM) considers family resources, including income and benefits such as SNAP, subsidized housing, and the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP). 2019 U.S. Census poverty data released in 2020 do not show a statistically significant difference between the poverty rate and the supplemental poverty measure for Davidson County.

50% to 200% of Poverty

There are several poverty thresholds. Understanding terms like “50% of the poverty level” or “200% of the poverty level” are very useful. For example, a household of four people with \$26,200 gross income would be considered in poverty. The 50% level of poverty means half of that amount for that family: \$13,100. The 50% of poverty threshold represents deep poverty or extreme poverty. As for 200% of the poverty level for a family of four, that amount would be \$52,400. With a gross income of \$52,400, a family of four would be categorized at 200% of the poverty level.

2020 POVERTY GUIDELINES

For 48 contiguous states and District of Columbia

Number of Persons in Family/ Household	Poverty Guideline
1	\$12,760
2	\$17,240
3	\$21,720
4	\$26,200
5	\$30,680
6	\$35,160
7	\$39,640
8	\$44,120

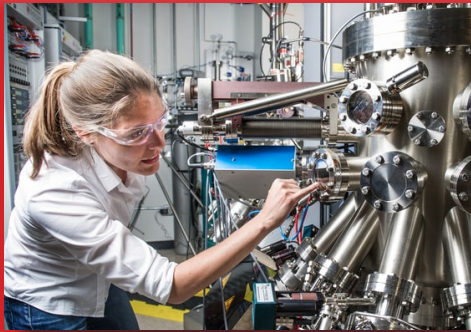
For families/ households with more than 8 persons, add \$4,480 for each additional person

WELLBEING: AN OVERVIEW

Economic wellbeing represents a state of present and future financial security. Present financial security includes the ability of individuals, families, and communities to consistently meet their basic needs, including food, housing, utilities, health care, transportation, education, childcare, clothing, and paid taxes. It also means having control over their day-to-day finances. It also includes an ability to make economic choices and feel a sense of security, satisfaction, and personal fulfillment with one's personal finances and employment pursuits. Future financial security includes the ability to absorb financial shocks, to meet financial goals,

to build financial assets, and to maintain adequate income throughout the lifespan.

Economic wellbeing may be achieved by individuals, families, and communities through public policies that ensure the ability to build financial knowledge and skills, to gain and maintain access to safe and affordable financial products and economic resources, and opportunities for generating income and asset-building. Wellbeing thrives within a context of economic justice within which labor markets provide opportunities for secure full employment with adequate compensation and benefits for all.



**Economic
Financial
Housing**

**Education
Community
Family**

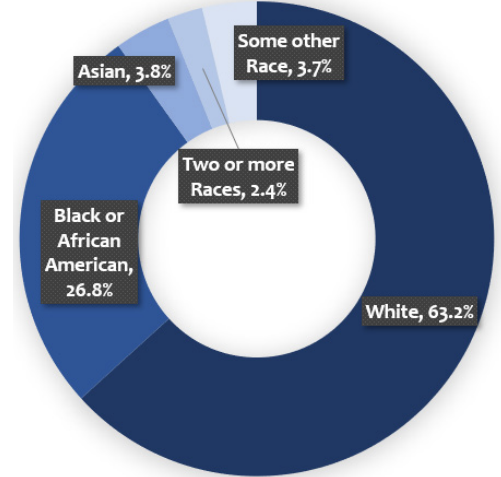


**Leisure
Health
Safety**

DEMOGRAPHICS

The population of Davidson County in 2019 was 694,144, an increase of 67,463 since 2010. The rate of growth slowed in 2016 through 2019 to annual change below 1.0% each year. This has been due primarily to a negative rate of migration, with more people moving out of Davidson County than into the county for each of those years. Population change has remained positive only due to natural increase of more births than deaths in the county.

Age Group	Percent
Under 5	6.6%
5 to 9	5.3%
10 to 14	5.8%
15 to 19	5.5%
20 to 24	7.1%
25 to 34	20.6%
35 to 44	13.8%
45 to 54	11.4%
55 to 59	6.0%
60 to 64	5.4%
65 to 74	7.7%
75 to 84	3.7%
85 and over	1.1%



Source: American Community Survey, 2019



11%

Population Growth since 2010

1 in 5

Nashvillians changed residence from 2018 to 2019

1 in 3

Nashville households headed by single female

Nashville's Generation Breakdown

Post-Millennials (iGen) born 1997-Present
30.3%

Millennials born 1981-1996
27.7%

Generation X born 1965-1980
17.3%

Baby Boomers born 1946-1964
19.1%

Silent Generation born 1945 or earlier
4.8%

94,396
Nashvillians are foreign-born

Source: American Community Survey, 2019

POVERTY

Poverty Rate - Major Urban Counties

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Davidson	19.3	18.9	17.8	19.9	16.9	14.8	14.5	15.4	12.4
Franklin	18.8	17.9	17.7	17.2	17.1	16.7	15.9	15.5	13.4
Fulton	19.1	18.3	17.6	16.8	15.3	15.6	14.2	12.9	13.5
Hillsborough	17.7	19.2	16.8	16.8	15.7	15.1	15.6	14.8	13.5
Jefferson	17.2	18.0	15.9	16.7	15.1	14.3	13.7	15.4	14.0
Mecklenburg	17.1	15.9	15.2	15.0	14.2	12.1	11.1	11.7	10.2
Travis	18.5	18.4	16.1	17.2	13.3	12.3	11.7	12.1	10.9
United States	15.9	15.9	15.8	15.5	14.7	14.0	13.4	13.1	12.3

Low  High

Source: American Community Survey, 2019

A comparison of the poverty rate of central counties in major U.S. metropolitan areas provides an insight into patterns over the past decade. A useful comparison includes the following:

Columbus, Ohio	(Franklin County)
Atlanta, Georgia	(Fulton County)
Tampa, Florida	(Hillsborough County)
Louisville, Kentucky	(Jefferson County)
Charlotte, North Carolina	(Mecklenburg County)
Austin, Texas	(Travis County)

Here, Davidson County has experienced the most consistently high poverty rate over this period, in many years as the highest or near highest among the comparison set. The long period required for Nashville to reach its lower level in 2019 suggests that new difficulties likely developed with the COVID-induced recession of 2020 and the challenge to again achieve a more positive path to reducing poverty.

In 2020,
a family of four
that is poor by
federal government
definition has an
annual income
below

\$26,200

For two people in a
household the
poverty line is

\$17,240

Nashville's poverty
rate was **higher** than
US average for

**7 of past
9 years**

Source: American Community Survey, 2019

Nashville Poverty

Nashville's poverty rate has remained high throughout the 2010s despite high levels of development and job increase. Major disparities persist by race, ethnicity, household composition and among children in Davidson County. The devastating economic consequences of 2020 have resulted in widespread increase in those challenged to make ends meet. Many working-class households have lapsed into economic hardship that likely will have long-lasting consequences.

	2019				2018			
	Population	Number in Poverty	Percent in Poverty	Percent of Children in Poverty	Population	Number in Poverty	Percent in Poverty	Percent of Children in Poverty
Asian	2,454	2,595	10.2	n/a	24,171	3,786	15.7	20.2
Black or African American	177,400	29,237	16.5	21.6	180,349	44,541	24.7	41.8
Hispanic or Latino	70,547	15,346	21.8	29.2	69,767	18,508	26.5	34.2
White	426,913	39,866	9.3	11.7	424,988	47,473	11.2	14.2
TOTAL	694,144	83,113	12.4	17.5	690,516	103,240	15.4	27.5

Source: American Community Survey

POVERTY

Poverty rates in Davidson County have ranged from 12.4 to 19.9 percent throughout the past decade. While 2019 saw the lowest poverty level in ten years, 2018 had the highest rate in three years. Consistently, approximately one in six Nashvillians lives below the poverty level every year. The events of 2020 have brought poverty conditions to many more residents of Davidson County through job losses, medical costs, business failures, and overall economic decline. Even before this recession, large numbers of Nashvillians were struggling in or near poverty, working in low paying jobs and juggling expenses for housing, health-care, childcare, food and transportation. **In short, the traditional stepping stones to a better life—gainful employment, quality education, stable and decent housing, safe and thriving neighborhoods, access to health care and proper nutrition, and opportunities to build assets—have become increasingly out of reach for many, not just in these difficult economic times.**

“There is nothing new about poverty.”

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr, 1964

Rising cost of living in Davidson County likely is forcing many households to relocate to more affordable areas outside the city, possibly reducing poverty numbers somewhat. While Davidson County saw its lowest number of persons living below poverty for the decade in 2019, this was not the case for the five largest adjacent counties- Robertson, Rutherford, Sumner, Williamson or Wilson. While Davidson County experienced a decline of 20,127 in poverty population from 2018 to 2019, the other five counties saw an increase of 3,850. The impact of the pandemic is expected to increase poverty levels across geographies and populations.

12.4%

of all people in Davidson County live below poverty
(2019)

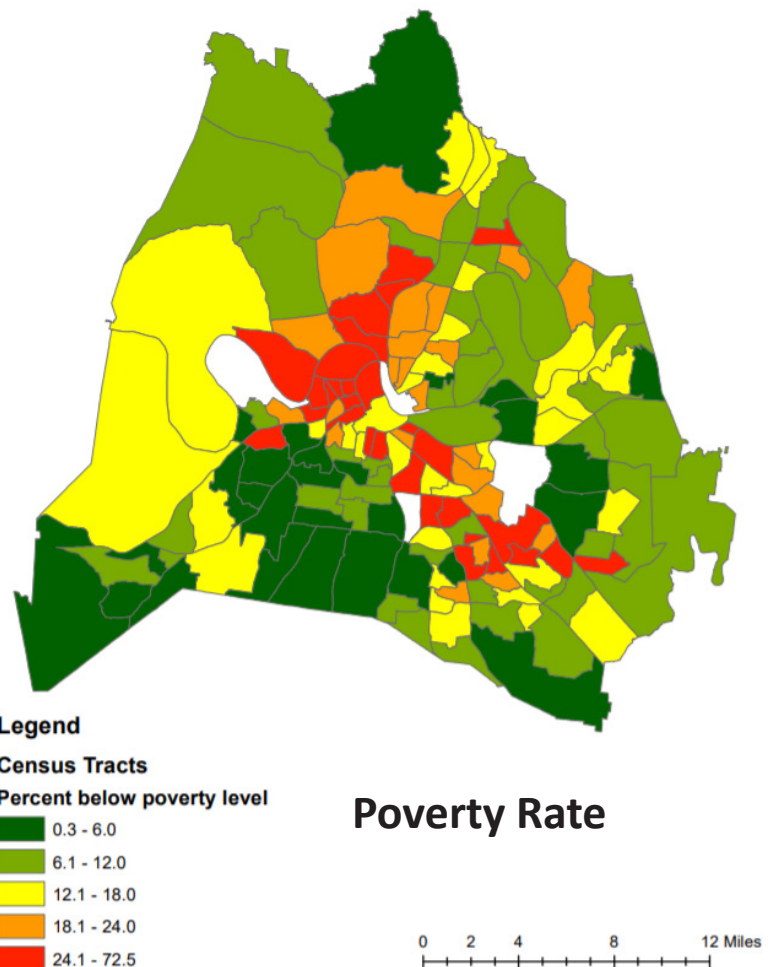
83,113

Number of Nashville residents that live in poverty

38,708

Nashvillians work full-time jobs with average wages
under \$12 an hour.

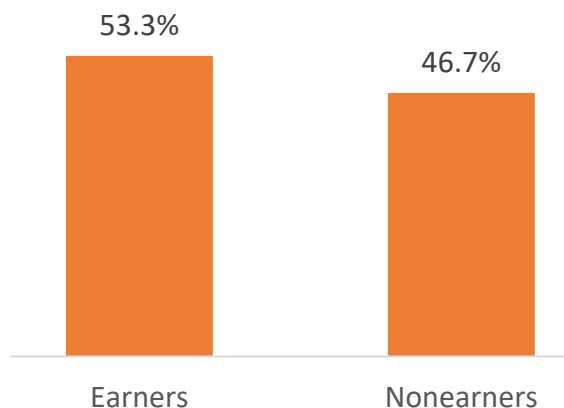
Source: American Community Survey, 2019



POVERTY

Poverty fundamentally relates to an economic threshold. Unless a household has wealth independent of income, that household must rely on a source of income- either earned or unearned. Earned income, naturally, comes from work of some type. Many persons are working and earn so little that they are still considered to be living in poverty. Unearned income can include transfers such as Social Security payments to the elderly and other groups. Since many researchers believe that the poverty thresholds used for eligibility for assistance payments are very low compared to actual financial needs of most households, this means that: 1) many households with earnings still are functionally in poverty situations without receiving benefits and 2) many households that receive unearned income do so at levels that are below what is needed for basic financial requirements.

Share of U.S. Population Who are Earners or Nonearners

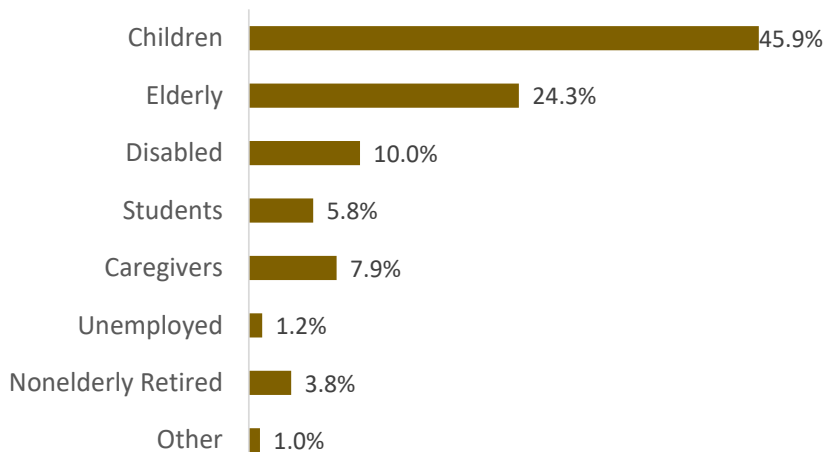


Source: US Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2019

Approximately 46.7 percent of the U.S. population are nonearners, insofar as they earn no income from work. Yet, nonearners make up about 80 percent of those in poverty. By far, the largest group of nonearners and those in poverty are children. Other major groups of nonearners include the elderly, those with disabilities, adult students and caregivers.



Who Are Nonearners?



Source: US Bureau of Labor Statistics

**Overcoming poverty is not a task of charity,
it is a matter of justice.**

Nelson Mandela

HOUSEHOLD ECONOMIC SECURITY

Paychecks are the means to economic security for most households. The standard of living is determined by an ability to afford all the needs and aspirations unique to each family and individual. A variety of factors contribute to household ability to make ends meet in their budget – neighborhood characteristics, race and ethnicity, policies that shape the local economy and job market, proximity to gainful employment, and numerous others.

Throughout past decades, and notably in the pandemic year 2020, wealth has accumulated rapidly for the very affluent in society. Meanwhile, poor and working households add little to their stockpile of wealth – or worse, continue to draw down what little savings may have occurred. Further, even modest inflation rates erode savings for the poor in ways that are unimportant to wealthy households.

Financial struggle thus has become the norm for many Nashvillians, involving many aspects of household experience – education loans, medical costs, skyrocketing housing costs, food and childcare challenges, and many others.

“if we take seriously the idea that inflation varies across different points in the income distribution, a different picture of the economic health of those with low incomes emerges.”

—from Center on Poverty and Social Policy’s *“The Cost of Being Poor”*

Median Household Income

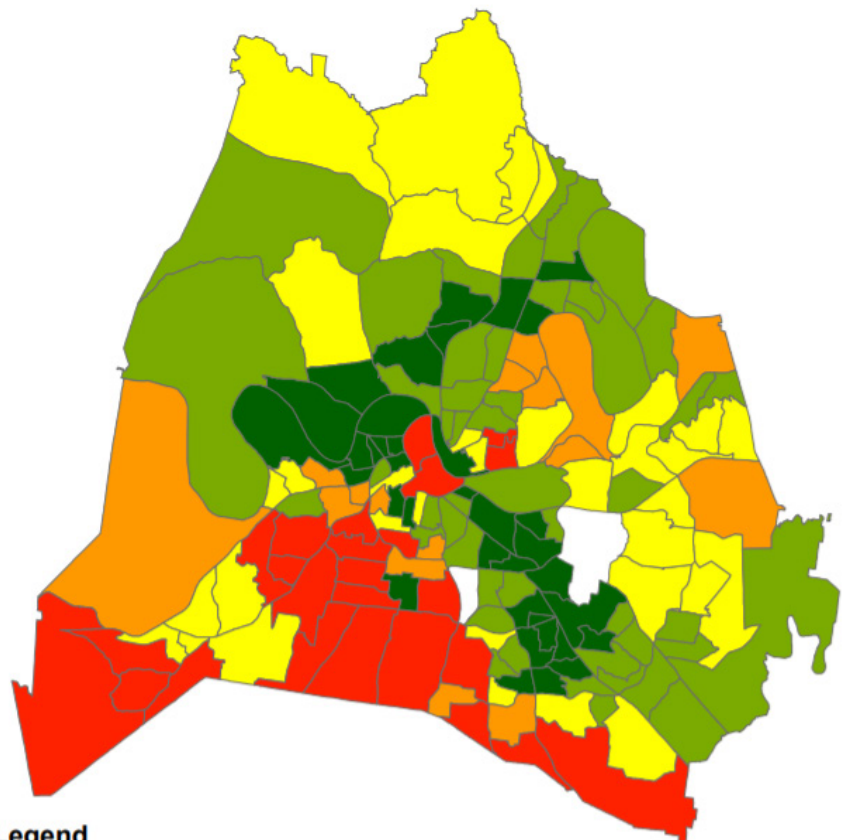
Median household income in Davidson County was \$63,938 in 2019. An estimated 31.5% of Nashville households had income below \$25,000 a year.

\$32,275 **\$25,408**
Men **Women**

Median income for Nashvillians over 25 with high school education

Source: American Community Survey, 2019

\$75,000 or more	18.4%
\$50,000 to \$74,999	18.6%
\$35,000 to \$49,999	17.8%
\$25,000 to \$34,999	13.8%
\$15,000 to \$24,999	11.5%
\$5,000 to \$14,999	10.8%
\$1 to \$4,999 or loss	9.2%



Legend

Census Tracts

Median Annual Earnings, Population Age 16 and over with Earnings



Median Annual Earnings



HOUSEHOLD ECONOMIC SECURITY

Nashville remains a city where economic growth appears visibly strong while tens of thousands of families live in fragile economic circumstances, deciding how to balance needs for medicine, housing, food, clothing and other necessities of life. Education, childcare, reliable transportation, and savings are luxuries out of reach for many. All of Nashville pays the price for this high level of poverty, day in and day out. All Nashvillians bear the cost of those with poor health, poor education, and lack of emergency funds. Poverty is costly to those experiencing it and poverty is costly to society.

“True individual freedom cannot exist without economic security and independence. People who are hungry and out of a job are the stuff of which dictatorships are made.”

President Franklin D. Roosevelt

Worrying Trends

Davidson County lags in progress on many aspects of poverty, with nearly one in five (17.5%) children living in poverty and one in ten (10.2%) seniors living in poverty. In 2019, every fifth worker in Nashville was part of the ‘working poor.’



1 in 10
Nashville
Seniors

1 in 5
Nashville
children are
living in
Poverty

American Community Survey

Tennesseans rank
4th highest
in US for
tax amount that
80% poorest
pay
relative to
the **5% richest**

Institute on Taxation and
Economic Policy

\$245
Amount of TANF
available monthly
to needy Tennesseans,
among lowest in nation.

\$740 million
remained unspent
in TANF
for poor families
in Tennessee in 2020

HOUSEHOLD ECONOMIC SECURITY

Household Income Across Cities

	Davidson	Franklin	Fulton	Hillsborough	Jefferson	Mecklenburg	Travis
Total Households	289,427	522,383	439,578	541,584	316,174	426,313	507,751
Less than \$10,000	5.0%	5.4%	6.3%	7.0%	6.4%	4.55	5.4%
\$10,000 to \$14,999	3.4%	3.3%	3.4%	3.4%	4.1%	3.4%	2.2%
\$15,000 to \$24,999	7.3%	9.0%	6.7%	7.95	9.3%	6.5%	5.8%
\$25,999 to \$34,999	8.5%	8.2%	6.3%	9.3%	9.7%	8.2%	6.25
\$35,000 to \$49,999	13.9%	12.1%	10.2%	12.9%	13.3%	12.9%	10.7%
\$50,000 to \$74,999	18.7%	19.5%	14.4%	19.3%	19.1%	18.5%	16.1%
\$75,000 to \$99,999	14.0%	12.7%	11.3%	12.2%	13.0%	13.1%	13.2%
\$100,000 to \$149,999	15.0%	16.0%	16.1%	14.7%	13.6%	15.2%	17.5%
\$150,000 to \$199,999	6.0%	7.1%	9.1%	5.5%	5.8%	6.9%	9.8%
\$200,000 or more	8.2%	6.7%	16.2%	7.7%	5.7%	10.9%	13.1%
Median Income (dollars)	63,938	64,713	80,013	61,154	59,049	69,072	80,726
Mean Income (dollars)	92,592	87,764	125,680	84,812	81,043	102,553	114,226

Comparison of Davidson County household income distribution with other central counties of metropolitan regions shows that Nashville overall has a larger concentration of middle class and lower middle class households than several other cities. Likewise, median household incomes are lower than several of the counties in the comparison set. The comparatively large share of households in lower income ranges indicates that much of the population in Davidson County struggles to cover basic household needs, with nearly a quarter of all households (24.2%) earning less than \$35,000 a year.

Source: American Community Survey, 2019



“America has a Wage Problem.”

Before the pandemic hit, 44% of U.S. families in 2019 did not earn an income that was high enough to cover their families’ living expenses. Markedly, families headed by women (53%), Black (58%), and Latino or Hispanic (57%) individuals and individuals without a high school diploma (65%) are much more likely to be struggling economically.

Source: The Brookings Institution

41.7%

Share of Nashville Region families that are struggling

The Brookings Institution

HOUSEHOLD ECONOMIC SECURITY

Impact of Raising Minimum Wage to \$15 by 2025 5th Congressional District TN

Share of workers affected

20%

Number of workers affected

115,000

Average annual wage increase per affected worker (2021\$)

\$4,200

Total annual wage increase for all affected workers (2021\$)

\$487,000,000

Source: Economic Policy Institute



\$22.87

Nashville Region
Family-sustain-
ing Hourly Wage
Threshold for
Families with
Children

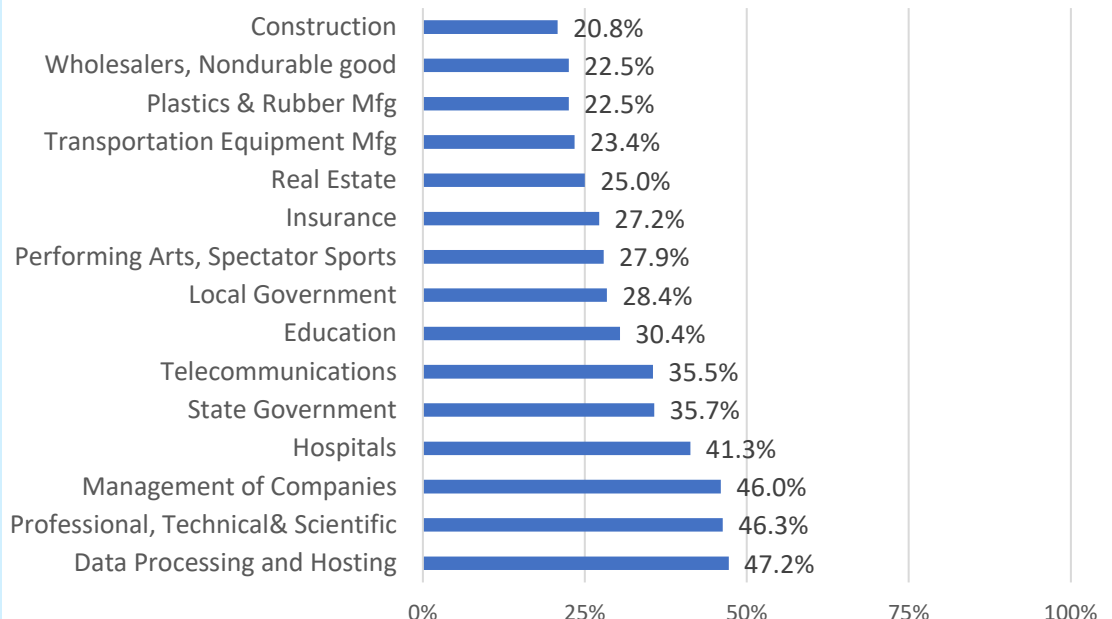
57,205

Deficit of Jobs in
Nashville Region
that pay
Family-sustaining
Wage for Families
with Children

Source: The Brookings Institution

Percentage of Family-Sustaining Jobs Nashville MSA

Prior to the pandemic of 2020, most industries in the Nashville Region produced jobs that paid far below family-sustaining levels. Many key sectors had only around a quarter or a third of employees earning wages that could support a family. The hardships of 2020 have intensified the situation of very large numbers of already struggling households.



Source: The Brookings Institution, 2021

ECONOMIC MOBILITY

Recessions have a disproportionate impact on lower income families because they cause rising unemployment, a reduction in work hours, and the stagnation of family incomes—all of which have the greatest impact for those with the least income. Economic mobility patterns, already low in Nashville, are stalled—perhaps for years to come. Year-to-year changes in the poverty rate are correlated (rise and fall) with the unemployment rate. In short, a bad economy means more time is lost in mobility gains, and more people fall into poverty.

1 in 4 Nashvillians work in retail or manufacturing	\$38,041 Median earnings for Nashvillians
Lowest 5% Davidson County rank for economic mobility in U.S.	About 1 in 3 Nashvillians earns less than \$25,000 a year

Source: American Community Survey, 2019

Bottom 5%

Nashville ranks in
the lowest 5%
for absolute economic mobility
in the nation

Source: Opportunity Insights

No 'Average Family'

Every family in Nashville is unique. A profile of any 'typical family' simply blurs the challenges and issues that every family faces on its own terms.

Poor children born in Nashville are **less likely** to experience positive economic mobility in their life than poor children born in Austin, Louisville, Charlotte, Raleigh, Chicago, or Denver.

There are **6,844 fewer** licensed childcare spaces in Nashville in 2019 than in 2016

Source: Tennessee Commission on Children and Youth

ECONOMIC MOBILITY

A key aspect of economic wellbeing is the role of employment and earnings. Yet, not all job markets provide the same opportunities for persons with specific skills. The comparatively low levels of unemployment in the period preceding 2020 in some ways disguise the quality of jobs in the Nashville market. Many individuals spend their working lives in the very large low-wage economy of Davidson County. While economic mobility is notoriously low for Nashville and efforts are needed to spur greater mobility patterns, it is unreasonable to expect all lower-earning workers to simply move to higher earning roles. The conundrum facing many economies is the challenge of many low-wage jobs that themselves will remain and need to be filled. Further, the gaps between these many low-skill jobs and other high-skill jobs are very large, often ones that have enduringly difficult barriers for many individuals and families within existing social and economic circumstances.



LABOR MARKET DAVIDSON COUNTY 2019

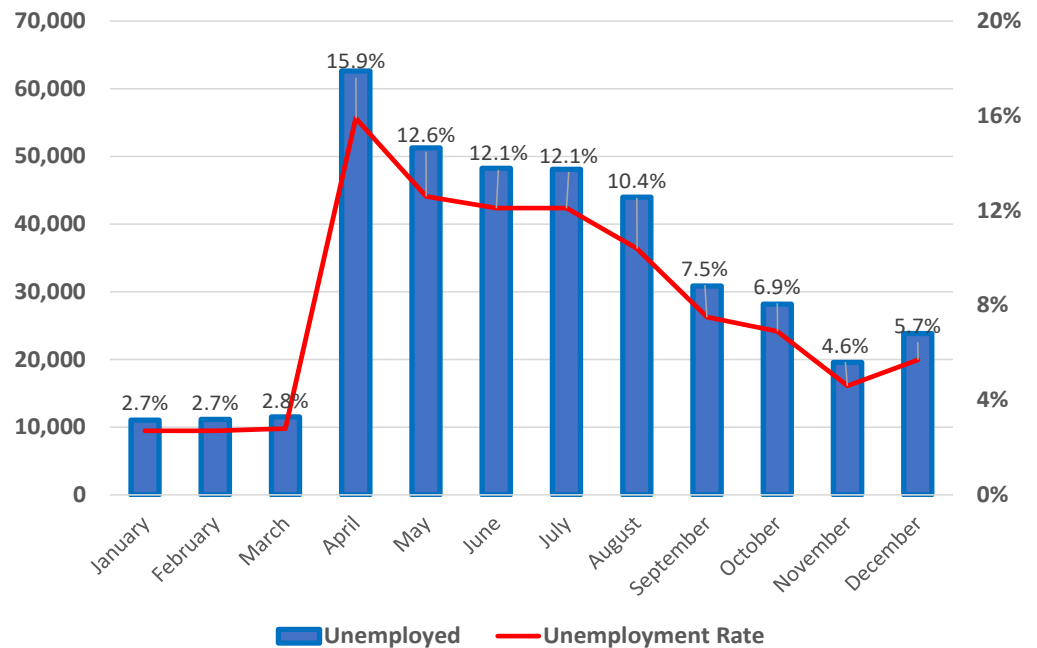
		Total	Labor Force Participation Rate	Unemployment Rate
AGE	16 to 19 years	31,992	47.0%	14.9%
	20 to 24 years	49,227	80.6%	6.9%
	25 to 29 years	74,181	89.2%	2.3%
	30 to 34 years	65,983	89.7%	3.5%
	35 to 44 years	99,905	83.1%	2.4%
	45 to 54 years	80,739	85.7%	2.3%
	55 to 59 years	44,495	72.3%	4.2%
	60 to 64 years	35,554	64.1%	2.2%
	65 to 74 years	51,192	35.2%	1.9%
	75 years and over	33,258	7.1%	2.1%
RACE & ETHNICITY	White	366,067	71.9%	2.3%
	Black or African American	147,108	70.0%	6.3%
	Hispanic or Latino	47,111	73.4%	2.6%
SEX	Male	216,022	86.9%	2.8%
	Female	229,162	78.7%	3.6%
EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT (25-64)	Less than High School	38,701	67.2%	5.5%
	High School Graduate	85,344	73.8%	3.9%
	Some College or Associates	97,394	84.1%	3.2%
	Bachelors Degree or Higher	175,418	90.2%	1.5%
BELOW POVERTY		54,674	60.4%	13.5%
WITH ANY DISABILITY		40,423	48.5%	7.7%

Source: American Community Survey

ECONOMIC MOBILITY

Unemployment levels in Davidson County reached historic highs in 2020 due to the COVID pandemic. While the levels moderated over the course of months, the disruption was severe, leaving many lingering effects. Moving from a tight labor market where unemployment was at the lowest level in decades, Nashville ended 2020 with unemployment rates the highest since the early 2010s and with a historic volume of decline in jobs overall.

Unemployment - Davidson County 2020



Source: Tennessee Department of Labor and Workforce Development

-8,169

Fewer workers in Davidson County in December 2020 than December 2019

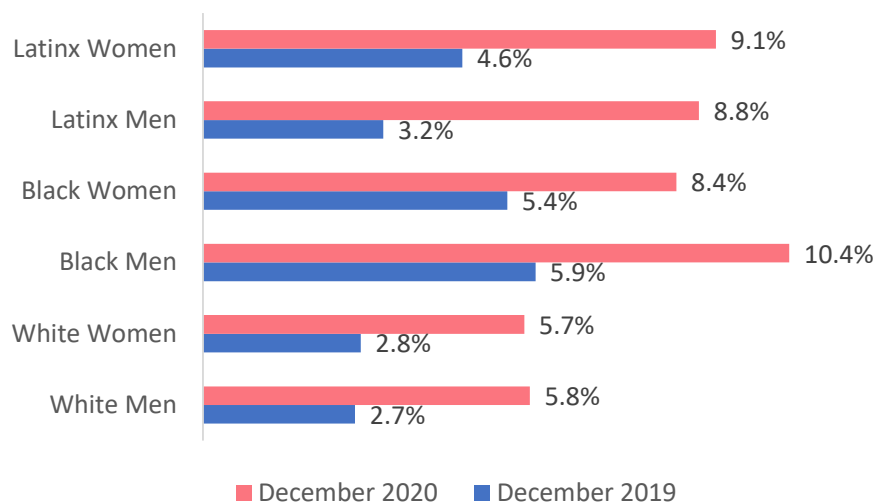
Largest one-year jobs decline

in Davidson County history

Source: Tennessee Department of Labor and Workforce Development

Rise in Unemployment Differs by Race and Ethnicity

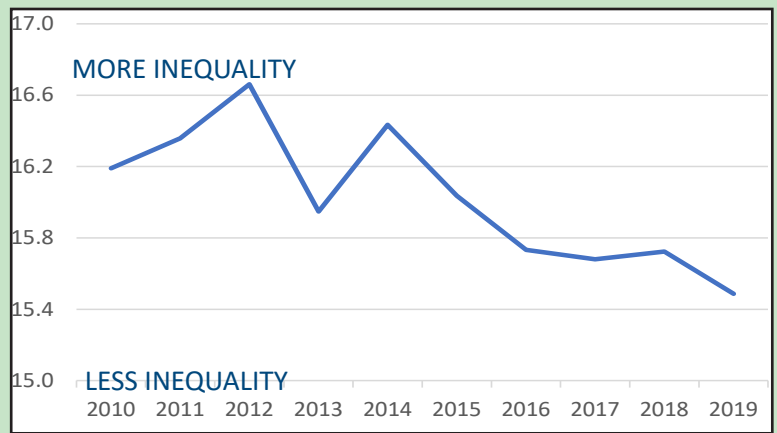
Unemployment rates have risen for all groups in the U.S. between December 2019 and December 2020. The largest increases have occurred in nonwhite population groups, which also already experienced lower median incomes prior to the economic downturn associated with the COVID pandemic.



ECONOMIC MOBILITY

Income Inequality - Davidson County

Income inequality has trended down slightly in the past decade. However, events of 2020 likely have adversely impacted this trend with many groups of earners in lower paying jobs experiencing lost or reduced income. These data represent the ratio of the mean income for the highest quintile (top 20 percent) of earners divided by the mean income of the lowest quintile (bottom 20 percent) of earners in Davidson County.

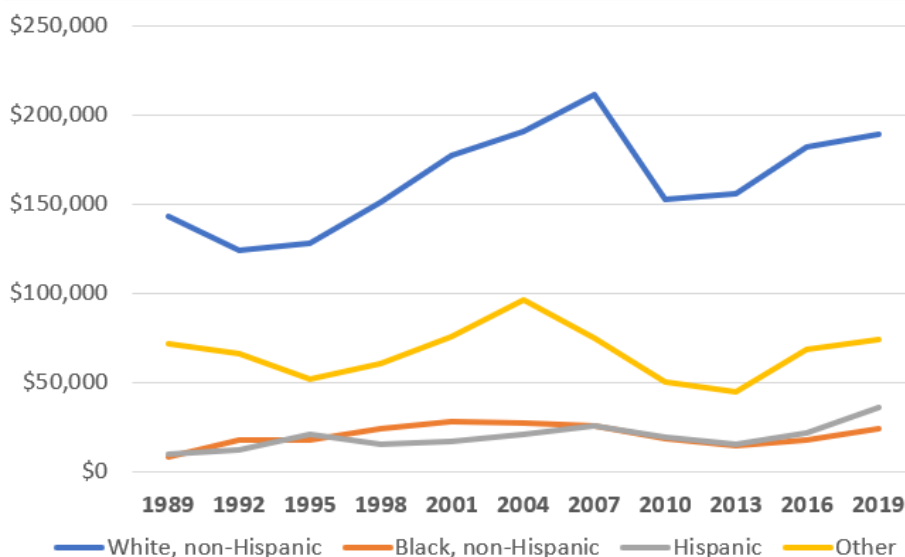


Source: Federal Reserve Bank

The median net worth of White households in the U.S. is approximately ten times greater than that of Black households. Gaps in wealth between Black and White households point to effects of accumulated inequality and discrimination. The wealth gap demonstrates the stark reality that equality of opportunity is absent despite decades of program efforts that address poverty. The wealth gap, however, relates to deeper, structural and historical factors that perpetuated this situation.



Median Household Net Worth by Race and Ethnicity - U.S.



Source: Federal Reserve Bank

The causes which destroyed the ancient republics were numerous; but in Rome, one principal cause was the vast inequality of fortunes.

Noah Webster

EDUCATION

Numerous studies show that educational attainment increases employment rates and earnings, which impact economic and family security long-term. While education is a key strategy for poverty reduction the cost of traditional higher education has increased exponentially, and created future economic hardship with the student debt crisis.

The foundation of education in the early years is critical as it provides opportunity for development and growth, pointing toward long-term success, which can include breaking the cycle of generational poverty. Poverty rates for high school graduates are lower than poverty rates for people without a high school diploma or equivalent.

Over 41,000
Nashville adults lack a high school diploma

\$29,168
Median earnings of Nashvillians with only high school diploma

48%
of Hispanics in Nashville have not completed high school

Educational Attainment in Nashville

Graduate or Professional	17.3%
Bachelor's Degree	28.3%
Associate's Degree	6.3%
Some College, no Degree	17.8%
High School	19.8%
Less than High School	10.5%

Source: American Community Survey, 2019

The best anti-poverty program is a world-class education

Pres. Barack Obama

Poverty Rates by Educational Attainment

US Census data reveal higher poverty rates for Nashvillians 25 years and older with lower educational attainment, with higher rates for females than males at each educational attainment level.

Level of Education Attained	MALE	FEMALE
Less than high school graduate	23.5%	33.5%
High school graduate	13.8%	18.3%
Some college or associate's degree	8.4%	11.5%
Bachelor's degree or higher	4.2%	5.7%

Source: American Community Survey, 2019

US Median Earnings by Educational Attainment

Less than high school diploma	\$592
High school diploma	\$746
Some college, no degree	\$833
Associate's degree	\$887
Bachelor's degree	\$1,248
Master's degree	\$1,497
Professional degree	\$1,861
Doctoral degree	\$1,883

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2019

EDUCATION

Only 1 in 5

MNPS students is ready to graduate with a regular high school diploma & meet success milestones that increase probability for postsecondary success.

College completion within 6 years for MNPS graduates

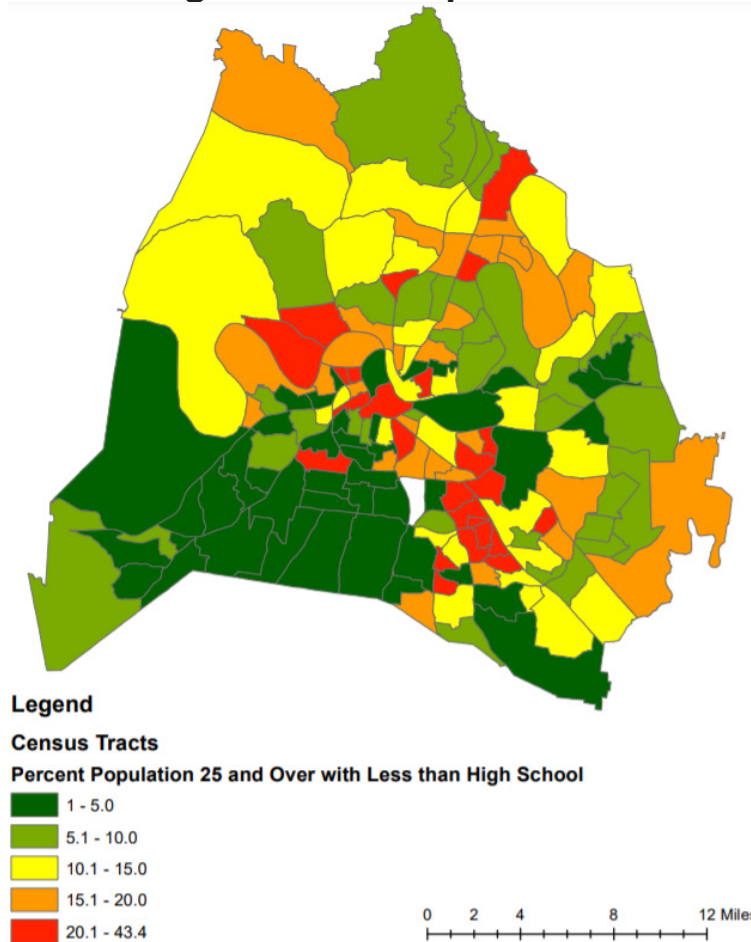
declined every year since 2013.

50.7%

of Nashville students are eligible for free or reduced-price lunch.

Source: MNPS, 2019

Adults with Less than High School Completion



According to the US Department of Health and Human Services, child care is affordable if it costs no more than 7% of a family's income. By this standard, only 13.8% of Tennessee families in 2020 could afford child care.

The average cost of childcare \$8,524



Four-Year Graduation Rates

In 2019, the 4-year graduation rate for MNPS high school students was 82.4%. Rates vary by race, ethnicity and subpopulations.

Female 87.6%

Male 77.7%

Race and Ethnicity

Asian 93.8%

White 85.5%

Hispanic 76.3%

Black 82.8%

Subpopulations

Economically Disadvantaged 78.0%

Homeless 66.2%

English Language Learner 66.0%

Students with Disabilities 61.3%

Foster 31.7%

There is no future without education.

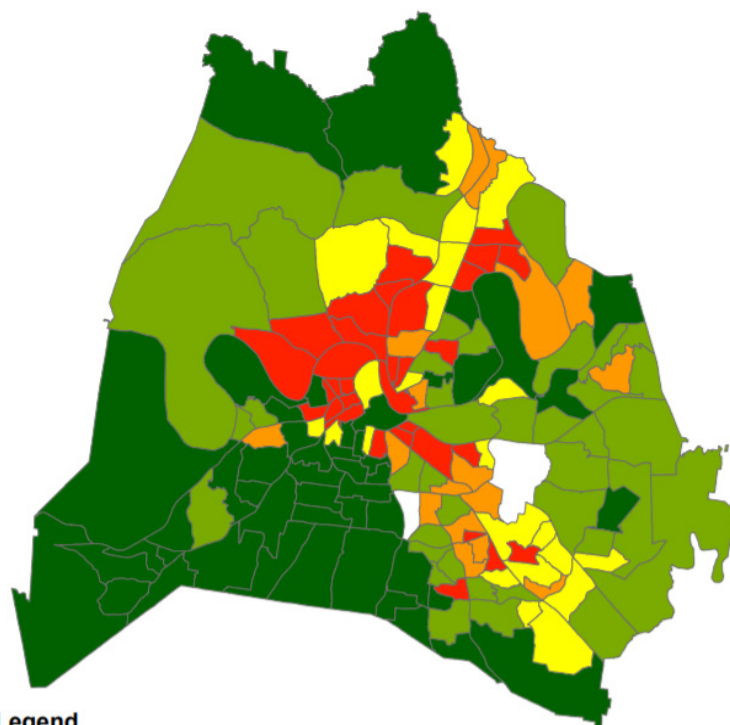
Rosa Parks

Source: American Community Survey, 2019

FOOD SECURITY

Food security is at the center of human wellbeing. Lacking nutritious food increases risk of disease and poor health and less mental focus at work for adults and at school for children. Yet, the struggle for adequate food is real for many Nashvillians. Already a serious need for tens of thousands before the COVID pandemic, the loss of employment and income has added thousands more to a hungry Nashville. **Lack of household funds, lack of access to outlets for nutritious food, and food services stretched thin have brought Nashville and many cities to dire situations for daily food for hungry children and adults.**

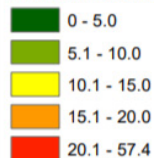
**FOOD IS
MORE THAN WHAT
WE EAT, IT AFFECTS
OUR HEALTH &
WELL-BEING & THE
RESILIENCE OF OUR
COMMUNITY.**



Legend

Census Tracts

Percent receiving SNAP



Households Receiving SNAP



Food Banks
Soup Kitchens



According to the USDA, the low-cost food plan for a family of four averages \$883 per month. Over the year, the total cost of food for a family is

\$10,596

National School Lunch Program

Free and reduced-price lunches offered by schools through the National School Lunch Program help address food insecurity for students. When school districts see participation past a certain threshold, all students across the district may be eligible for this program, increasing access to food insecurity solutions that benefit the whole community.

FOOD SECURITY

12.4%

Food Insecurity Rate
Davidson County Population

The COVID pandemic created severe financial problems for millions of people in the U.S affecting their ability to pay for housing, healthcare, and other expenses.

14.4%

Food Insecurity Rate
Davidson County Children

One in 4
U.S. adults have had trouble **paying their bills** since start of pandemic.

One-third
have **dipped into savings** or retirement accounts to make ends meet.
Center for Budget and Policy Priorities

About **1 in 6**
have borrowed money from friends or family or have gotten food from a food bank.
Pew Research Center, 2020

Source: Feeding America, 2020



During the COVID pandemic, **45 million** in the U.S. experienced hunger.

Nearly **5.3 million senior adults** currently face hunger in the nation.

In 2020, due in part to the pandemic, **15 million children** - 1 in every 5 kids - may not know where they will get their next meal.

African American households face **hunger at a rate twice** that of white, non-Hispanic households.

Source: Feeding America, 2020

HEALTH

Most Nashville residents have access to health care with employer-provided insurance, but in our system of employer-provided insurance, those at the lowest levels of income are rarely provided coverage by their employer. In 2019, the average cost of health insurance for family coverage was \$20,576, according to the Kaiser Family Foundation, with an average employer covering about 70% of the cost.

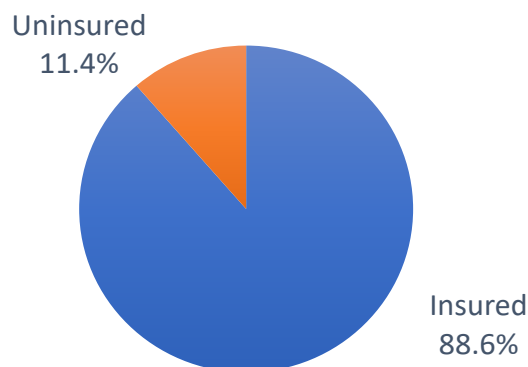
In this health care system, low-income families often pay out-of-pocket for health care while higher income individuals receive employer subsidies. This impedes low-income individuals' access to primary and preventative care, increasing health care costs for all Nashvillians.

Health and longevity are influenced by income, but determining the unique contributing factor can be difficult because income and health intersect with many other social determinants of health, including access to housing, workplace safety, racial segregation, social support, food insecurity, and more.

Health Insurance

Since 2011, the percentage of those uninsured in Davidson County has declined from 16.9% in 2011 to 11.4% in 2019. Over the past five years, the rate has remained relatively steady, still leaving more than one in ten Nashvillians, or some 78,000 persons, without health insurance.

Insurance Status Davidson County Population



Source: American Community Survey, 2019

77 YEARS Life Expectancy in Davidson County

8,725 YEARS of life lost annually due to poor health in Davidson County

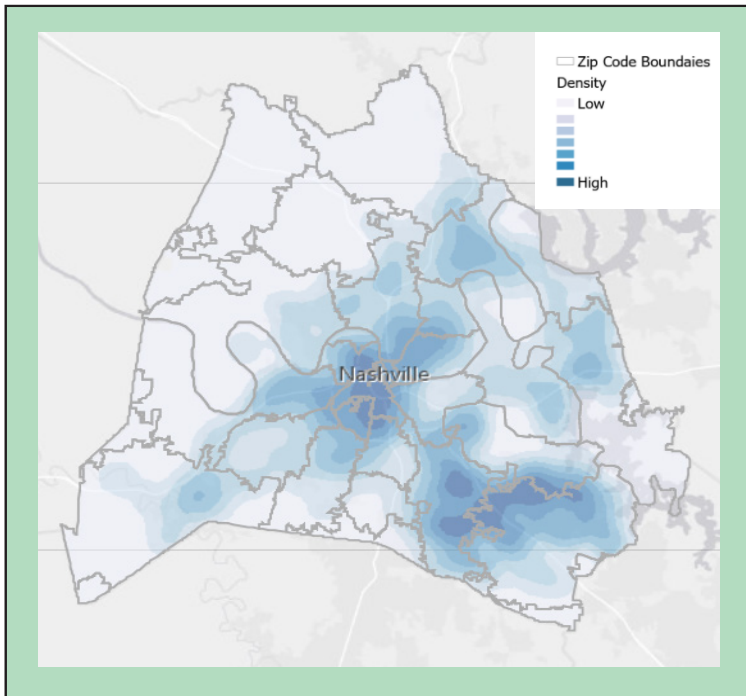
In 2019, the cost of health care for an average American family of four covered by an average employer sponsored health insurance plan was **\$20,576** with employers paying an average of \$14,561.

The monthly premiums are **\$501.25** per month for an annual total of \$6,015. This does not include any other health care costs the family may have, such as copays for doctor visits, prescription medications, deductibles, and other co-share responsibilities as part of a health plan.

Source: Kaiser Family Foundation



HEALTH



COVID-19
could push half a billion
people worldwide
into poverty

Oxfam

COVID-19: Transforming Events

1 in 4
women are
considering
downshifting
their careers
or leaving the
workforce
due to the
coronavirus

McKinsey & Co.

Total Cases 81,141

Active 541

After 10 Months

Deaths 547

Recovered 75,053

Source: Metropolitan Health Department, Nashville

While many risks and vulnerabilities associated with disasters are specific to local areas or regions, the COVID-19 pandemic has exposed the health, social, and economic vulnerabilities of all our communities. Most affected by the impact of the pandemic have been people experiencing challenges such as low income or unstable employment, food insecurity, mental illness, disability, chronic health conditions, social isolation, caregiver stress, and intimate partner violence. Their need for support has increased, which has put financial pressure on the health and social supports in communities to meet increased need, while also shifting methods of service delivery to ensure client, staff, and volunteer safety.

At the time of writing, the long-term ramifications on individuals, towns, cities, states, and the country are yet to be fully realized, but it is undeniable that the response and recovery will take years not months. This is a period of continuous learning and adjustment as we collectively face the threats to physical, social, mental, environmental, and economic well-being. The need for lasting support and flexibility to address evolving issues as they emerge is the next priority. How we respond to the COVID crisis individually and collectively both now and going forward will shape our communities for generations to come.

HEALTH

Adverse Childhood Experiences

Adverse Childhood Experiences, or ACEs, are potentially traumatic events that occur in childhood such as experiencing violence, abuse, or neglect, and having a family member attempt or die by suicide. These can include aspects of the child's environment that undermine their sense of safety and stability, such as growing up in a household with substance misuse, mental health problems, or instability due to parental separation or incarceration of a household member. Traumatic events in childhood can have effects that persist for years.



Overdose Crisis
2 persons
die every day from
drug overdoses
in Nashville.

County Health Rankings

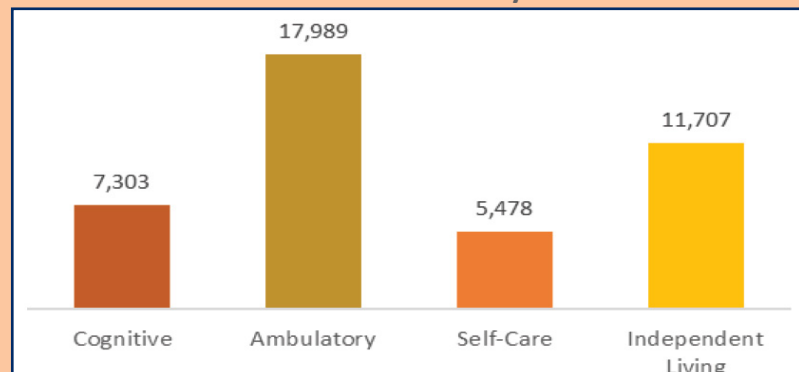
Tennessee has
5th lowest
life expectancy
in the US

Centers for Disease Control, 2018



Most Common Disabilities in Nashvillians

Disabilities of Seniors by Type
Davidson County



Source: American Community Survey, 2019

Seniors

Pain, mobility and or flexibility,
hearing, independent living

Age 15 & over

Mental health disabilities

Youth

Mental health-related, followed by
learning and pain-related

Persons with disabilities in Nashville had an unemployment rate of 5.4% in 2019

We live in a world in which
we need to
share responsibility.
Fred Rogers

SOCIAL WELLBEING

Social isolation and loneliness are terms that denote a degree of social disconnection. Social isolation is marked by few or infrequent social contacts. Loneliness is the subjective and distressing feeling of social isolation, often defined as the gap between actual and desired level of social connection. Social connection and connectedness encompass a variety of concepts that demonstrate that being physically or emotionally connected to others can influence health and well-being. Just as strong social connection is protective for health, a lack of social connection carries risk. These risks have been increasingly reported in recent years, with a former US surgeon general referring to them as an epidemic.

Belonging

Belonging is best understood as something people experience when they feel accepted and valued for who they are, regardless of the norms by which our culture assigns worth, such as income level, educational attainment, ethnicity or health status.

- Loneliness among Americans increased to **61%** in 2019, up from 47%.
- A 2020 Cigna survey found that **79%** of Generation Z and **71%** of millennials are lonely versus 50% of boomers.
- Risk of earlier death increases by **26%** for loneliness, **29%** for social isolation, and **32%** for living alone.



Social Isolation

Social isolation is a health risk for many, especially older adults. Six risk factors of social isolation in adults age 65 and older are: poverty; living alone; divorced, separated, or widowed; never married; disability; and independent living difficulty. Chronic social isolation increases mortality risk comparable to high blood pressure and lack of exercise.

Safe and Caring Communities

Crime in Nashville has remained relatively stable and at the same time the need to respond to individuals who are in crisis has increased significantly. This category of response calls is non-criminal in nature, yet the situations are urgent and complex. As a result, community policing strategy has evolved to connect those individuals who are in crisis to experts in organizations who are most skilled in assist-

ing with that individual's unique circumstance. A referral is made as soon as possible after the situation has been calmed. The police, working collaboratively, have built strategic supports at the community level. The goal is to have regular contact among social service leaders, municipal leaders, school leaders and the police in order to understand community needs and to coordinate intervention strategies.

HOUSING

When Nashville considers its housing issues, it finds misalignment in household abilities to afford housing that the market produces, along with other issues of suitability, adequacy and accessibility. Policy decisions underlying the composition of industries and occupations of Davidson County have resulted in a 'two-tier' city where in-migration of population and high-wage jobs match well with newer, costlier housing while many in the existing population largely earn less and are priced out of housing.

These policies persist as conscious actions which worsen an already difficult challenge for many long-time, working Nashvillians. Pushing lower- and middle-class working households out of range of affording housing is just one of many ways that growth and development interests diminish the economic and social wellbeing of large numbers of Nashville households. This 'out of balance' situation is thus not a benign or natural outcome, but rather results from deliberate and tangible policies and practices, motivated by a growth narrative that fails to deliver economic improvement to existing Nashvillians. Funding construction of less costly housing options for residents will remain a difficult, costly and elusive prescription for a situation where many and larger policies and actions continue to erode financial viability of working families; stable, intact neighborhoods; and meaningful job creation matched to needs of existing residents.



**19.5% OF
HOME OWNERS
SPEND MORE THAN
30% ON HOUSING**

**AVERAGE COSTS
FOR NASHVILLE
MONTHLY SHELTER
\$1,190**

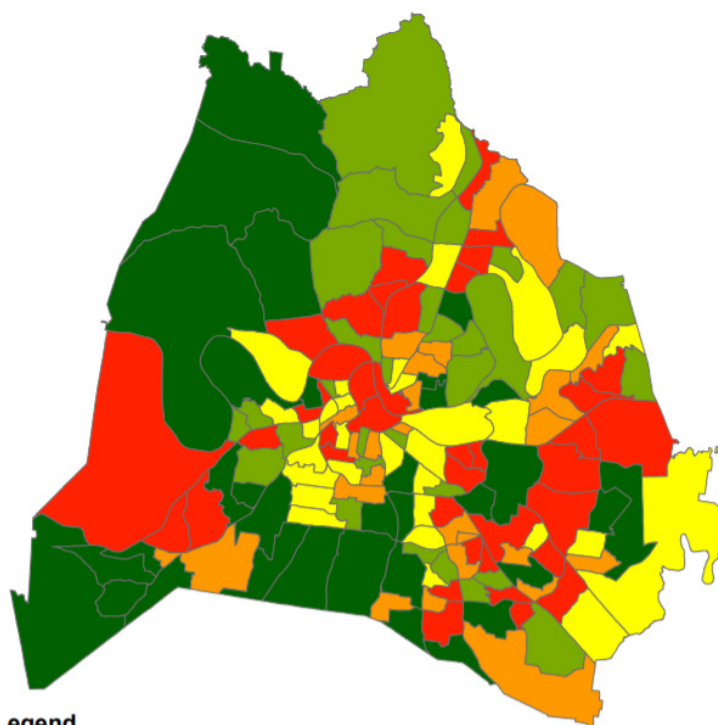
Source: American Community Survey, 2019

x5 Average house price in Nashville is 5.6 times the median annual household income.

Source: Greater Nashville Realtors

**46.2%
OF RENTERS
SPEND MORE
THAN 30% ON
HOUSING**

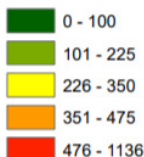
Housing is considered unaffordable if households are spending over more than 30% on shelter costs (including mortgages, rent, property taxes, condominium fees, electricity and water). People in households that spend 30% or more of total household income on shelter expenses are defined as having a "housing affordability" problem.



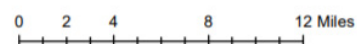
Legend

Census Tracts

Households with Income <\$50,000, paying 30% or more of Income for Rent



Cost-Burdened Households



HOUSING

Many Nashvillians encounter great difficulty in buying homes or paying rent at levels that meet their ability to pay based on household income. The challenge is that demand for housing at lower prices is high while supply continues strong in producing more costly product. This market failure occurs due to a combination of lagging worker earnings for many, policy and incentive that promotes development of more costly housing to be developed, and aggressive recruitment of external business and workers that increases higher earner households that displace Nashville residents and greater equilibrium between housing demand and supply. Housing affordability is thus a result of numerous underlying policies and activities that disrupt the ability of long-time residents and lower- and middle-income households to continue to own and rent housing at levels matching their incomes.



Government assistance for renters and homeowners will not be enough to pay off accumulated rent and mortgage payments. A renter who pays \$800 per month and has deferred payments from April through December **will owe at least \$7,200** when the rent moratorium ends. A homeowner who has deferred monthly payments of \$1,000 **will owe at least \$9,000**. The more moratoriums are extended, the greater the accumulated debt.

Harvard Joint Center for Housing Studies



Latinx renters in mostly White neighborhoods are **2 times more likely to be evicted** than Latinx renters in more diverse neighborhoods.

Center for American Progress

“Potential of being the biggest housing crisis of our lifetime”

David Dworkin, CEO, National Housing Conference

Number of Nashville cost burdened older homeowners

increased 21% from 2010-2019.

American Community Survey

Davidson County has

1,986

homeless persons

From 2010-2019 estimates ranged from 1,938 to 2,298

Point in Time Counts

NEW DIRECTIONS

Wellbeing is both a theoretical concept and it is a lived reality. The work of society to ensure that all persons experience high levels of wellbeing involves many activities, approaches, and efforts. A system as complex as a city like Nashville means that there are both many people and many and varied activities within this system.

Nashville looks forward to the 2020s with renewed hope that life will gain a more predictable, manageable pattern. But, returning to normality for many still means a life where financial struggle and social inequities are part of daily life. Since complex systemic issues have weakened the ability of many to experience favorable economic and social wellbeing, a different focus on those issues is important. In short, systemic challenges require systemic solutions.

The work of a **Wellbeing Cabinet**, comprising key organizations and efforts in the public and non-profit sector, is the first step to understanding and then aligning activity that addresses social and economic wellbeing. The work of Metropolitan

Social Services in research and analysis suggests the usefulness of a new approach, one that aims for systemic review and change, transformation and innovation in addressing wellbeing of the city's population. Working together with leadership of committed organizations and individuals, a Wellbeing Cabinet with clear purpose can redefine the collective approach to wellbeing in Nashville. From a serious, informed process, new levels of effectiveness and efficiency can emerge that yield improved outcomes without necessarily more resources. Redeploying efforts, aligning activities, and evaluating collective results provide direction that can result in a Nashville of the 2020s where all city residents experience improved social and economic wellbeing.

Addressing poverty and wellbeing requires a unified effort. Every element of household life connects to others. Aligning approaches to build meaningful opportunity involves innovation and commitment to real, sustained change. All of society pays the price - directly and indirectly - for those that experience inadequate social and economic wellbeing.

92,212

Total Number of Medicare beneficiaries in Davidson County in 2019

132,795

Persons enrolled in TennCare in Davidson County in 2019

10,153

Waiting list for Section 8 Vouchers in Nashville in 2020

7,418

Nashville households receiving MDHA Section 8 Housing Assistance in 2020

NEW DIRECTIONS

Misunderstanding the concept of poverty **hinders action.**

A perspective that only sees the symptoms of poverty inevitably will overlook the root causes of poverty. Instead, a consensus approach can recognize that manifestations of a condition are not the same as the reasons that the condition exists. Physical wellbeing, for example, only in special situations relies on triage and palliative measures. Similarly, in economic and social wellbeing, solutions will rarely result from singular focus on symptoms. Feeding a hungry person through charity does not change what forced the person to seek assistance. Diagnosing root causes of hunger, housing inadequacy, poor health, education and workforce talent gaps, lack of access to childcare, and many other aspects of struggle is essential and points to structures that create and perpetuate these conditions.

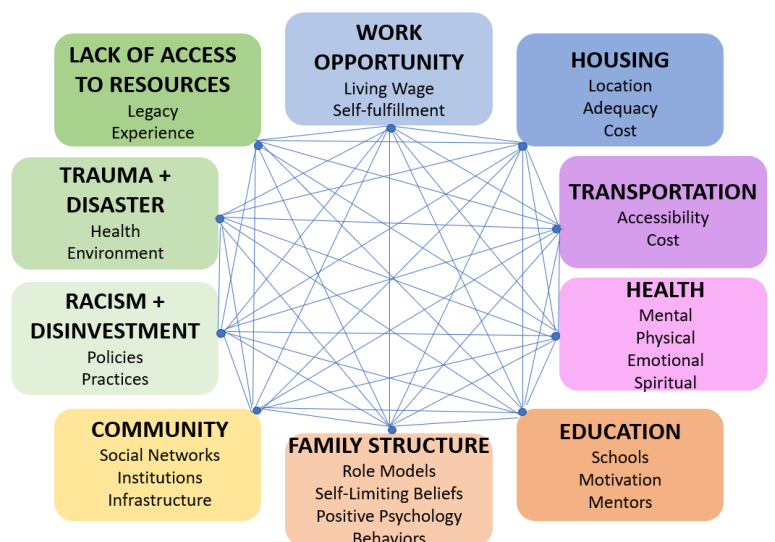
A lack of continuity **hinders action.**

Relying on a mutually accepted agenda of action toward human wellbeing that offers continuity and transparency will serve as a foundation for transformation. Commitment to responsible analysis and reporting on the manner in which poverty occurs and persists will yield new and important insights. These insights can then inform continuous review, honest acknowledgement of causation of financial hardship, and action that corresponds to these issues. Concern over wellbeing with no responsible owner leads to no meaningful solution; yet, poverty through diffused causation requires collective ownership for real results. Apart from any one individual, organization, business or election cycle, the continuity of community's informed agenda to address poverty offers sustainable and enduring solutions.

Economic and community development efforts not aligned with wellbeing priorities **hinder action.**

Community commitment to broad-based prosperity and wellbeing for all residents results in a value that transcends all community development policies and practices. Ongoing work of structuring an economy and labor force needs to offer clear examples of local policy that can best shape opportunity for existing residents, rather than intensifying their displacement. Land use policy that aligns with wellbeing will prioritize maintaining and improving neighborhoods over development interests that may not result in equitable and inclusive outcomes. These values envision consistent, constant, committed and inclusive priority of final outcomes that purposefully serve all resident needs and aspirations, including those that are struggling to make ends meet. Conversely, continuously reinforcing lopsided labor market outcomes often do not deliver adequate income levels for broad community vitality and growing aggregate economic outputs.

LANDSCAPE OF POVERTY INFLUENCERS & REINFORCERS



NEW DIRECTIONS

Local decisions have enormous influence in **advancing action** for wellbeing.

While federal programs and policy have a long history and reputation for addressing poverty, a very substantial impact on local residents' economic lives is determined by local decisions. Land use policy, economic and workforce development priorities, transportation systems, zoning and permitting of businesses, and many other aspects of local governance are the vital factors that shape quality of life for local residents. Intentional approaches to this governance provide a coherent outcome for the population while policies that act in opposition to one another simply intensify costs and challenges. Meanwhile, those on the margins of economic success, increasingly a large share of society, struggle to get by financially. Development actions at the same time displace communities and homes, resulting in gentrification. Jobs with skill requirements unmatched to local talent do little to advance labor market opportunities for existing workers. Housing markets that are disrupted by opportunistic investors that make housing unaffordable do not occur in a vacuum – they are determined by local decisions. These choices reveal that control over wellbeing for local populations clearly is in the hands of the local community and its institutions.

Accepting proven results and rejecting disproven approaches **advance action**.

Simply put, evidence matters. The experience of decades of program efforts directed at reducing poverty offers abundant evidence of what works and what does not work. Failing to recognize the harmful impacts of “trickle-down” economic policies on the population and persisting with false

narratives of economic growth that is development-oriented rather than people-oriented simply erodes and stifles wellbeing for much of the population. An era of skepticism over science has clouded the value of empirical evidence which demonstrates high and rising poverty and inequality despite a veneer of growth highlighted by construction activity and corporate earnings. The enduring belief that uncoordinated, unfocused, unmeasured growth will benefit everyone fails to leave room for needed investigation of new alternatives. Research clearly validates the importance of targeted investments in mental health, public education, transportation, and cohesive neighborhoods. Likewise, research that disproves failed approaches has resulted in meaningful criminal justice reform, rising concern over corporate welfare, and greater need for wellbeing of people as the ultimate metric of community success.

Creation of a Wellbeing Cabinet offers unique opportunity to **advance action**.

Establishing a Wellbeing Cabinet can provide the first step in ownership of poverty and wellbeing, grounded in a well-established understanding of the root causes rather than its symptoms. This Cabinet can embody a culture of collaboration that involves many paths to address the complexities that shape human wellbeing in Nashville and to achieve positive collective impact. Through fostering a consensus direction with space for innovative approaches and expansive ideas, this relationship of intentionality can gain traction and provide gains far in excess of the ‘sum of the parts.’

State and local governments enact laws and regulations that define how economic activity takes place. These range from labor market rules to tax policy to environmental regulations to zoning rules. In addition, policymakers' decisions about how to allocate resources—to education, transportation, or other public goods—are crucial to the U.S. economy. Although the federal government, either by law or by general practice, is required to do extensive analysis of the rules and regulations it makes, this is not always true at the state and local levels. The choices made across states—and sometimes local jurisdictions in the same state—often vary widely.

The Hamilton Project, 2019

NEW DIRECTIONS

Why collaborate?

Local government and community leaders can work across public, private and administrative boundaries for the simple reason that by doing so they can amplify their influence over the economic wellbeing of the population and get more from their assets through partnerships than they can do individually.. Collaboration means leaders can draw upon the full range of assets within their city as well as draw in assets, scale and expertise from the wider city region, widening the opportunities available and raising the quality of wellbeing for those most in need. Collaboration serves to break down walls between partners to make the most out of mutually beneficial assets and shared purposes.

These efforts allow partners to take a more strategic approach to a larger range of assets, rather than be limited by acting on a topic or case-by-case basis. Collaborations can then create greater gains more in line with local priorities. Working together reduces risk and shares costs across organizations, giving access to additional funds – either because several local authorities are working together and bringing money, or because one specific institution can then access additional funds. Together, this work offers more human resources that benefit from one organization’s specific skills or knowledge to deliver the project. Lastly, collaboration allows new opportunities for partnership – not only between existing partners, but successful partnerships that will generate ambition and experience for future, additional cross-boundary collaboration.

Ecosystem of Cross-agency Effort

Rather than a focus only on isolated or novel ways to support collaboration, government can embrace an emerging ecosystem of organizations that supports cross-agency effort and activity. Mission-focused, cross-agency priority goal projects can decisively find new direction and outcomes for seemingly intractable challenges, such as poverty.

Cross-agency management can bridge acquisition, financial, information and human capital challenges while building administrative system coherence. These organizational and institutional practices can then encourage shared learning, innovation, and responsibility. This collaboration can serve to advance cross-agency goals and improve performance management using internal consulting, coaching, training, and convening. Relying on sustained cross-agency summits, problem-solving sessions and working meetings can become normative for sharing knowledge and promising practices. These new roles and organizations – and the network they form – are the primary ingredients of a dynamic coherence that maintains cross-agency collaboration. A true ecosystem of institutions can flourish where innovation and interaction are hallmarks in addressing wellbeing of all community residents and neighborhoods.

What’s Already Working?

These programs and services already in place help Nashville families.

3,276

Families receive Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) in 2019

20,522

Households receive Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits

13,549

Nashville women and children received Women, Infants and Children (WIC) Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program benefits in FY2019

35.0%

of three-and four-year olds enrolled in preschool (public or private) in 2018

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Metropolitan Social Services **Guiding Economic and Social Wellbeing**

Board of Commissioners

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Metropolitan Social Services – Strategic Planning & Research

Abdelghani Barre, Assistant Director of Administration and Research

Dr. Garrett Harper, Spatial and Socioeconomic Data Analysis & Design

Lee Stewart, Social Data Analyst

**Anyone who has ever struggled with poverty knows
how extremely expensive it is to be poor.**

James Baldwin

METROPOLITAN SOCIAL SERVICES

Strategic Planning and Research

