

REPORT

SPRING 2007

Growing Suburban Poverty

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Recent national headlines announced poverty shifting to the suburbs. For the first time, 2005 census estimates show that the suburban poor outnumber the poor living in urban areas by about 1.2 million nationwide. "We are seeing our own version of that trend here in the Kansas City metropolitan area," said Karen Wulfkuhle, UCS executive director. "While the urban poor continue to outnumber the suburban poor in our region, the rate of increase in poverty in the suburbs is significantly higher." The number of poor in Johnson County, Kansas, and Clay and Platte Counties, Missouri collectively increased 63 percent between 2000 and 2005. This compares to a combined increase for Jackson County and Wyandotte County of 18 percent.

Even though growing in the suburbs, poverty and especially the unique challenges of concentrated poverty (income under 50 percent of poverty) remain in the urban core. According to an analysis of trends by the Brookings Institution⁽¹⁾, across the nation in 2005, the poverty rate in large cities was twice

as high as suburbs (18.8 percent and 9.4 percent, respectively).

The study found that today's poverty trends mirror other economic and population trends, such as rapid suburban population growth, job growth in the suburbs, and stagnant wages for many, particularly workers in low-paying service jobs. Based on analysis of the 2000 U.S. census and the 2005 American Community Survey, the Brookings study concluded that the poor—and especially the working poor—figure prominently among suburban populations today.

"Growing suburban poverty is often invisible," noted Wulfkuhle. "Even many households grappling with poverty or near-poverty may not see themselves as poor, but rather as working households who increasingly find that they cannot make ends meet. This raises new challenges for us as a community to design effective responses."

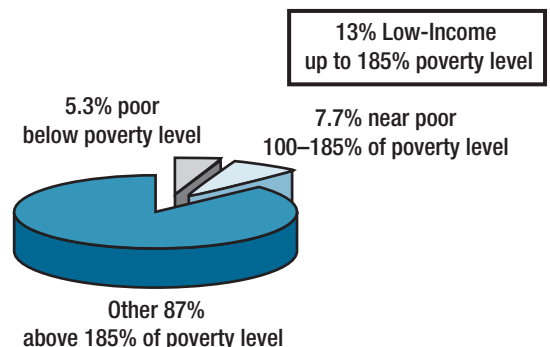
⁽¹⁾ Alan Berube and Elizabeth Kneebone, "Two Steps Back: City and Suburban Poverty Trends 1999-2005" (Washington: Brookings Institution, 2006).

How many in Johnson County are poor?

The data source for the profile of Johnson County poverty that follows is the 2005 American Community Survey. The most current, multi-faceted data source available, it describes poverty during the previous 12 months for a sample of the population. Findings for Johnson County in 2005 include:

- More than 26,700 people were officially poor with yearly income below the federal poverty level. This represents 5.3 percent of the County's population, or about 1 in 20 people.
- Another 38,300—1 in 13 people—can be considered near-poor, with yearly income between 100 percent and 185 percent of the poverty level (7.7 percent).
- Adding these two together, nearly 1 in 8 people in Johnson County can be considered low-income with yearly income below 185 percent of the federal poverty level (13 percent).

1 in 8 Johnson Countians can be considered low-income



What is “poverty”?

Although poverty is a subjective term, the federal poverty level (FPL) which originated in the 1960s, is designed as a threshold for measuring poverty. While it is not considered a complete description of what people and families need to live, the stability of the measure over time does allow for tracking trends that help communities respond to changing conditions.

The federal poverty thresholds are updated annually for inflation and vary according to number of household members and their ages. The same thresholds are used throughout the United States and do not vary for the 48 contiguous states. Income used to compute poverty status includes earnings; government payments such as Social Security, SSI and public assistance; pension or retirement

income; interest and other sources. Noncash benefits, such as food stamps and housing subsidies do not count.

Poor families

People are considered officially poor if their household income is below the poverty level. In 2005, the federal poverty level for a family of four was \$19,350.

Near-poor families

People are often considered near-poor when their household income is between 100 percent and 185 percent of the federal poverty level. In 2005, a near-poor family of four made between \$19,350 (100 percent FPL) and \$35,798 (185 percent FPL).

About the data:

The 2005 American Community Survey is a product of the U.S. Census Bureau. Data are limited to the household population and exclude the population living in institutions,

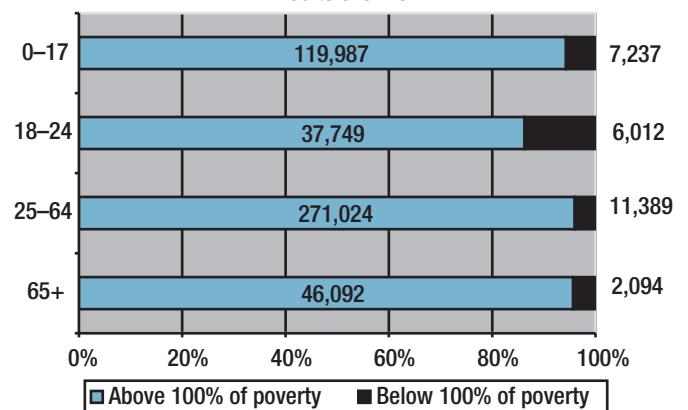
college dormitories and other group quarters. Data are based on a sample and are subject to sampling variability. Complete details are available at <http://factfinder.census.gov>.

The Johnson County Profile – Who is most at risk?

There is not a single face of poverty. Some groups with above-average risk of poverty in Johnson County include:

- One in 4 single parents with children under 5 lives in poverty (28 percent).
- One in 6 single parents with children under 18 lives in poverty (16.1 percent for males and 17.4 percent for females).
- One in 5 adults over the age of 25 with less than a high school education lives in poverty (21 percent).
- One in 5 Latinos lives in poverty (18.8 percent).
- One in 6 African-Americans lives in poverty (16.2 percent).
- One in 7 young adults 18–24 years old lives in poverty (13.7 percent).
- One in 8 over the age of 5 with a disability, and not institutionalized, lives in poverty (12.2 percent). If the disability is mental, one in 5 is poor (20 percent).

Children and Young Adults are more likely to be poor than Adults over 25



- One in 9 who speaks a language other than English at home lives in poverty (11.3 percent).
- One in 14 seniors who has a self-reported disability and is not institutionalized lives in poverty (7.2 percent).

The working poor

Increasingly the face of poverty is that of the working poor. Data from the 2005 American Community Survey related to poverty and work include:

- Almost 2 in 3 (63 percent) or over 12,000 poor adults over 16 worked full- or part-time in the previous 12 months.

- 3 in 5 working-age adults in poverty were under age 35, ages when young adults are entering the work world.
- 6 in 10 (61 percent) of poor adults age 18 to 64 are women—demonstrating that working-age adults living in poverty are more likely to be female.

Children in poverty

Poverty has been linked to greater risk for various negative outcomes, especially for children. Documented risk factors for children include negative consequences for education, such as learning disabilities, grade repetition and lower test scores. Data from the 2005 American Community Survey related to poverty and children in Johnson County include:

- Children under 18 in poverty grew from 4,304 (3.4 percent) in 2000 to 7,237 (5.8 percent) in 2005.
- 3 in 4 poor children are under age 12—years that the science of early childhood tells us are critical for school and later life success.

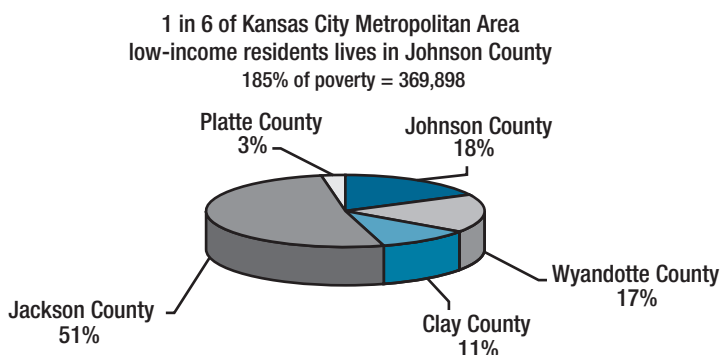
Johnson County Poverty in Context

The regional picture

One in 6 poor persons in the five-county metropolitan area lived in Johnson County in 2005—up from 1 of 11 in 1990 and 1 of 9 in 2000. Comprised of Johnson and Wyandotte counties in Kansas, and Clay, Jackson and Platte counties in Missouri, poverty grew significantly in all counties between 2000 and 2005. Over 168,170 persons in the five-county region were considered poor in 2005, an increase of nearly 37,000 since 2000. An additional 201,728 were considered near-poor.

Similar to the national trend of growing suburban poverty, the increase was most pronounced in the suburban counties. The number of poor in Johnson County, Kansas, and Clay and Platte Counties, Missouri collectively grew by 18,106 people, a 63 percent increase between 2000 and 2005.

Jackson County and Wyandotte County poor together grew by 18,785 people, an 18 percent increase.



The region's population between 2000 and 2005 grew by an estimated 81,000 people, 5.4 percent. At the same time, the number of low-income (185% of poverty and below) grew by 66,000, or 22 percent. Johnson County low-income grew by 22,400 people, accounting for one-third of the regional growth in low-income residents.

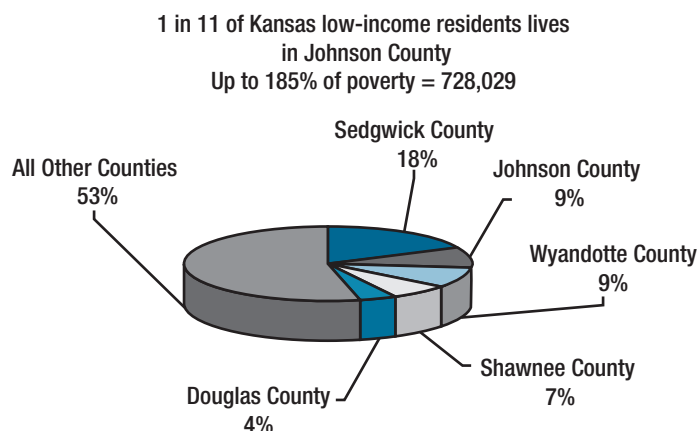
Kansas City Metropolitan Area County Residents in 2005 at Three Poverty Thresholds

	Johnson County, Kansas	Wyandotte County, Kansas	Clay County, Missouri	Jackson County, Missouri	Platte County, Missouri	Total for 5 county area
Total	500,220	153,309	198,666	647,666	81,196	1,581,057
Very Poor						
Under 50% of poverty	9,608	12,459	6,710	45,989	2,424	77,190
Poor						
Up to 100% of poverty	26,732	30,153	14,940	91,213	5,132	168,170
Low-income						
Up to 185% of poverty	65,089	63,632	39,554	191,609	10,014	369,898

The statewide picture

Across Kansas, 310,000 people have incomes below the federal poverty level; an additional 420,000 are considered near-poor, with income between 100 and 185 percent of poverty.

One-half of the poor in Kansas live in five of the state's most populous counties: Douglas, Johnson, Sedgwick, Shawnee and Wyandotte. Johnson County has the third highest number of poor and accounts for 9 percent of the state's poor. When the number of low-income (up to 185 percent of poverty) is considered, Johnson County is the second highest.



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Johnson County Poverty in Context *(Continued from page 3)*

When compared to these same counties, between 2000 and 2005, Johnson County saw the largest percentage increase in the number

of individuals who are poor, growing 75 percent from 15,323 in 2000, to 26,732 in 2005.

Kansas County Residents in 2005 at Three Poverty Thresholds

	Douglas	Johnson	Sedgwick	Shawnee	Wyandotte	Kansas State Total
Total	93,696	500,220	458,195	166,998	153,309	2,651,109
Very Poor						
Under 50% of poverty	7,596	9,608	26,824	7,902	12,459	127,446
Poor						
Up to 100% of poverty	14,729	26,732	59,730	19,900	30,153	309,561
Low-income						
Up to 185% of poverty	31,222	65,089	130,009	48,651	63,632	728,029

SAVE THE DATE

State of Caring June 12, 2007 • 8:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.

Join UCS and United Way of Johnson County on June 12 for this annual event. Navigating the Future, Setting the Course, 2007–2011 will be released. Details will be available on the UCS website, www.ucsjoco.org; invitations will be mailed in early May.

Annual Report available—
The 2006 UCS annual report is available at www.ucsjoco.org. (Go to “About UCS, Financial Information.”) To have a printed copy mailed to you, contact the UCS office at 913-438-4764.



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