



ECONOMIC MOBILITY AND ANTI-POVERTY ADVOCATES ARE HOUSING ADVOCATES

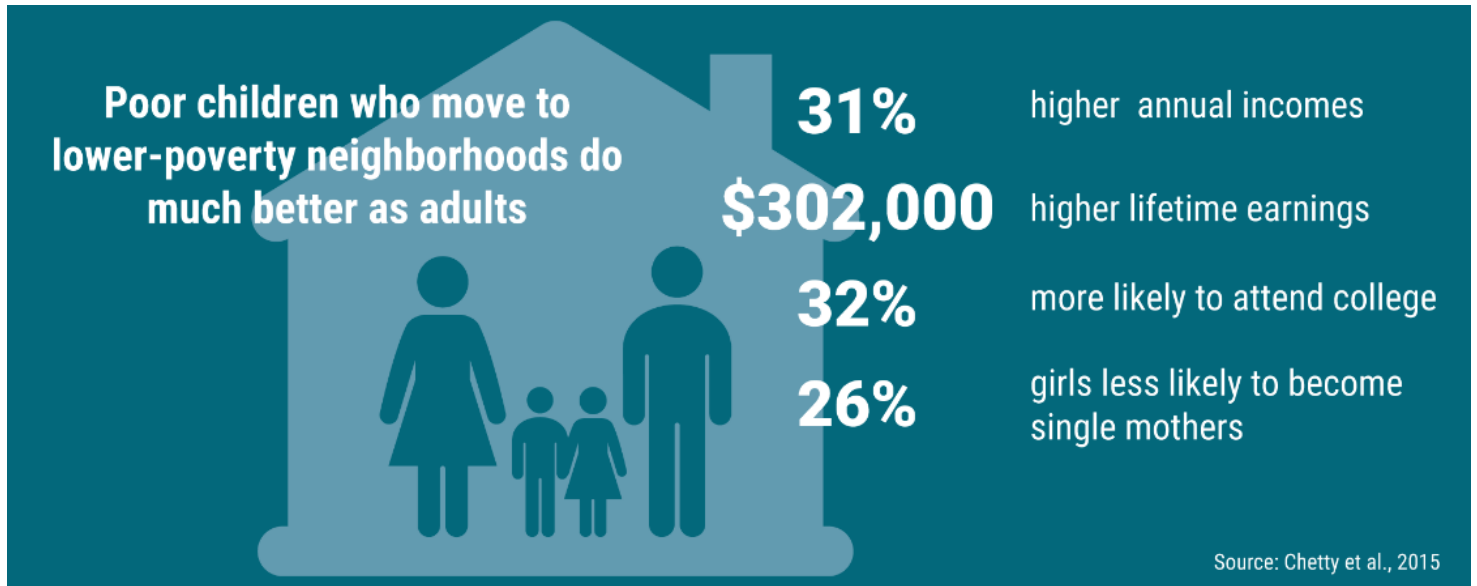
Safe, affordable housing enables people with low incomes to climb up the income ladder and achieve the American Dream.

“Where a person lives has a significant effect on their ability to achieve holistic upward mobility from poverty. High-quality housing that is affordable, stable, supports asset building, and is in neighborhoods of opportunity can promote upward mobility; housing that lacks these qualities can inhibit upward mobility.” Quoted from [Urban Institute](#), 2024

- The US Partnership on Mobility from Poverty was a group of 24 multi-sector leaders who convened to explore ways to significantly increase mobility from poverty in the United States. The Partnership created a three-part definition of mobility that reflects the factors that can support or inhibit mobility: economic success, power and autonomy, and being valued in a community. A range of policy areas influence these components of mobility, including housing policy ([Urban Institute](#), 2021).
 - Housing programs that are successful in addressing all three aspects of mobility frequently share characteristics including: providing short-term financial relief, building human capital in the form of educational supports, tailoring services to individual participants’ goals, building close relationships among participants and staff, and reducing stigma ([Bogle et al.](#), 2020).
- A landmark study by Harvard economist Raj Chetty demonstrates the enormous positive impact that affordable housing can have on upward economic mobility for low-income children. Chetty analyzed the long-term adult outcomes for low-income children whose families used a housing voucher to move to lower poverty neighborhoods through HUD’s Moving to Opportunity experiment ([Chetty](#), 2015).
- A study looking at changes in economic opportunity for children born between 1978 and 1992 found that incomes in adulthood increased across all parental income levels for Black children, which resulted in a 27% reduction in the Black-white race gap in economic mobility ([Chetty](#), 2024).
 - The study also found that differences in economic mobility by race and class were driven by changes in the neighborhood where children grew up. Across racial and class groups, changes to parental employment rates in communities were highly correlated with changes in children’s outcomes ([Chetty](#), 2024).

- Results from a 2016 HUD study revealed that families experiencing homelessness that received long-term housing assistance to stabilize their housing saw a reduction in psychological distress for the head of household and a reduction in food insecurity, economic distress, and children's behavioral problems compared to families who did not receive long-term housing assistance ([Gubits et al., 2016](#)).

For low-income children who moved before age 13



Because of this, future children and grandchildren are more likely to be raised in a better neighborhood by parents who have more education and more income, which helps break the cycle of generational poverty.

- “Young adults who had lived in public or voucher-assisted housing as teenagers had higher earnings and lower rates of incarceration than young adults from unassisted low-income households. The study suggests that housing vouchers and public housing provide low-income parents with greater financial resources to devote to their children’s development, which improves adult outcomes later in life ([Andersson, Haltiwanger, & Kutzbach, 2016](#)).” Quoted from [NLIHC, A Place to Call Home](#)
- “Research shows that increasing access to affordable housing is the most cost-effective strategy for reducing childhood poverty in the United States.” Quoted from [NLIHC, A Place to Call Home](#)
- “In 2012, housing assistance programs such as rental vouchers and public housing lifted 4.0 million people above the poverty line.” Quoted from [Center for Budget and Policy Priorities, 2015](#)

Affordable housing helps children from low-income families to thrive in diverse, well-resourced neighborhoods, leading to greater success in adulthood.

- Urban Institute identified 5 aspects of housing that affect upward mobility: housing quality, housing affordability, housing stability, housing that builds assets and wealth, and neighborhood context. These aspects work together to influence a household's chance of upward mobility ([Urban Institute](#), 2021).
- Social capital, the strength of a person's social network and community, may be a significant driver of economic mobility. Children who grow up in communities with more interaction between families with low and high incomes are much more likely to rise out of poverty as adults. Affordable housing policies aimed at creating more diverse and equitable neighborhoods can increase interaction across class lines ([Opportunity Insights](#), 2022).
 - “If children with low-income parents were to grow up in counties with economic connectedness comparable to that of the average child with high income parents, their incomes in adulthood would increase by 20% on average. To put this impact in context, this gain in earnings is equivalent to the difference in average outcomes between a child who grows up in a family that makes \$47,000 a year instead of \$27,000 a year.” Quoted from [Opportunity Insights](#), 2022
- Separate and unequal neighborhoods perpetuate educational and economic inequities across generations. Children whose parents grew up in neighborhoods with high poverty rates scored significantly lower on reading and problem-solving tests than those whose parents grew up in neighborhoods with low poverty rates ([Urban Institute](#)).
- Along with economic outcomes, housing mobility can improve child health outcomes. A study of children with asthma whose families participated in a Baltimore-area housing mobility program and moved from high poverty areas to low poverty areas between 2016-2020 found statistically significant reductions in asthma exacerbations and maximum symptom days. The reduction of asthma exacerbations after moving was even found to have a greater effect than use of inhaled corticosteroids ([Pollack, Roberts & Peng](#), 2023).

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