

Assisted housing segregation may reduce children's chances for upward mobility

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Children might find it particularly difficult to escape poverty if they live someplace where government-assisted housing is segregated across neighborhoods.

Low-income children appear more likely to become low-income adults when they grow up in places where assisted housing is highly spatially concentrated or located in racially and economically segregated areas, a new study says.

A University of Michigan and University of Southern California study examined the locations of assisted housing and how they predicted people's chances of remaining low income across generations.

Researchers used data from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, Internal Revenue Service and U.S. Census Bureau, among other data sources. Income mobility data captured children born between 1980-1985, measuring their parents' income through federal tax returns and then children's own income later in life up to age 32. Researchers determined childhood county residence and factored in an extensive range of background characteristics such as local government spending, housing rental and purchase prices, racial and ethnic compositions, violent [crime rates](#), and labor market conditions.

The counties tracked in the study are distributed across all U.S. states except Alaska and Hawaii. More than 9 million children living in these counties form the basis of the study's income mobility statistics.

"Results suggest that children from low-income families are more likely to remain low income as young adults if they grow up in areas where assisted housing is especially segregated," said Deirdre Bloome, U-M assistant professor of sociology and the study's lead author.

But in areas with mixed income levels, results suggest that greater assisted housing prevalence may boost upward income mobility, said Bloome, who is also a faculty affiliate of the Population Studies Center and Survey Research Center at the Institute for Social Research.

Segregated assisted housing may be detrimental not only for children who live in assisted units but for all low-income [children](#) in the area, said co-author Ann Owens, an assistant professor of sociology at USC. Segregated assisted housing may contribute to further racial and poverty segregation, low-quality schools, high crime rates and neighborhood stigma that affects all low-[income](#) residents, she said.

This is why policies that integrate assisted housing and reduce racial and poverty segregation are important, Bloome said.

The researchers will present their findings at the annual American Sociological Association meeting Aug. 21 in Seattle.

Provided by University of Michigan

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