

Poverty in Birmingham

Birmingham ranks 42nd out of 100 metro areas in extreme poverty

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By **Jeff Hansen -- The Birmingham News**

BIRMINGHAM, Alabama --- Birmingham runs in the middle of the pack in a ranking of "concentrated poverty" released today by the **Brookings Institution Metropolitan Policy Program**.

Concentrated, or extreme poverty, is a neighborhood (U.S. Census Bureau tract) where at least 40 percent of the people live below the poverty line.

Today's ranking finds the Birmingham metro area at 42nd out of the 100 largest U.S. metro areas in the share of the metro's poor population who live in those extreme-poverty tracts. Some 10.9 percent of the metro area's poor people lived in those tracts, a percentage that did not change appreciably from 2000 to 2005-09.

Living in such neighborhoods has wide-ranging handicaps, from low economic opportunity and more expensive shopping to higher crime and poorer health.

The city of Birmingham ranked 36th out of 95 primary cities of metro areas in the share of its poor population, 24.6 percent, who live in extreme-poverty tracts. This was a 3.2 percentage point increase from 2000 to 2005-09. In Birmingham in 2005-09, 14,038 poor people, out of a total 56,983 poor people in the city, lived in extreme poverty tracts.

Ten of the metro area's 11 extreme poverty tracts are located within the city of Birmingham.

The Brookings study used data from annual American Community Surveys in 2005-09 and from Census 2000. The ACS data is used because Census 2010 did not ask questions about income.