



# Pathways of Persistently Poor Children

Caroline Ratcliffe and Emma Kalish

Urban Institute

Strong Foundations: The Economic Futures of Kids and  
Communities

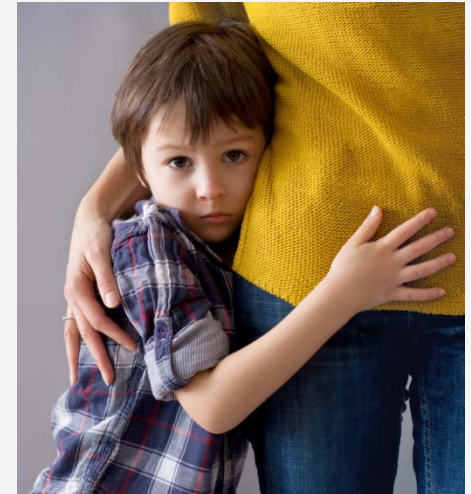
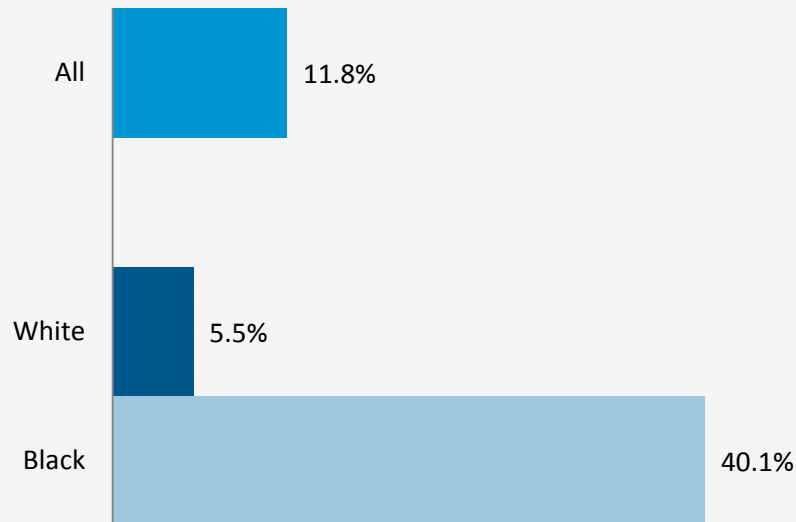
March 23, 2017



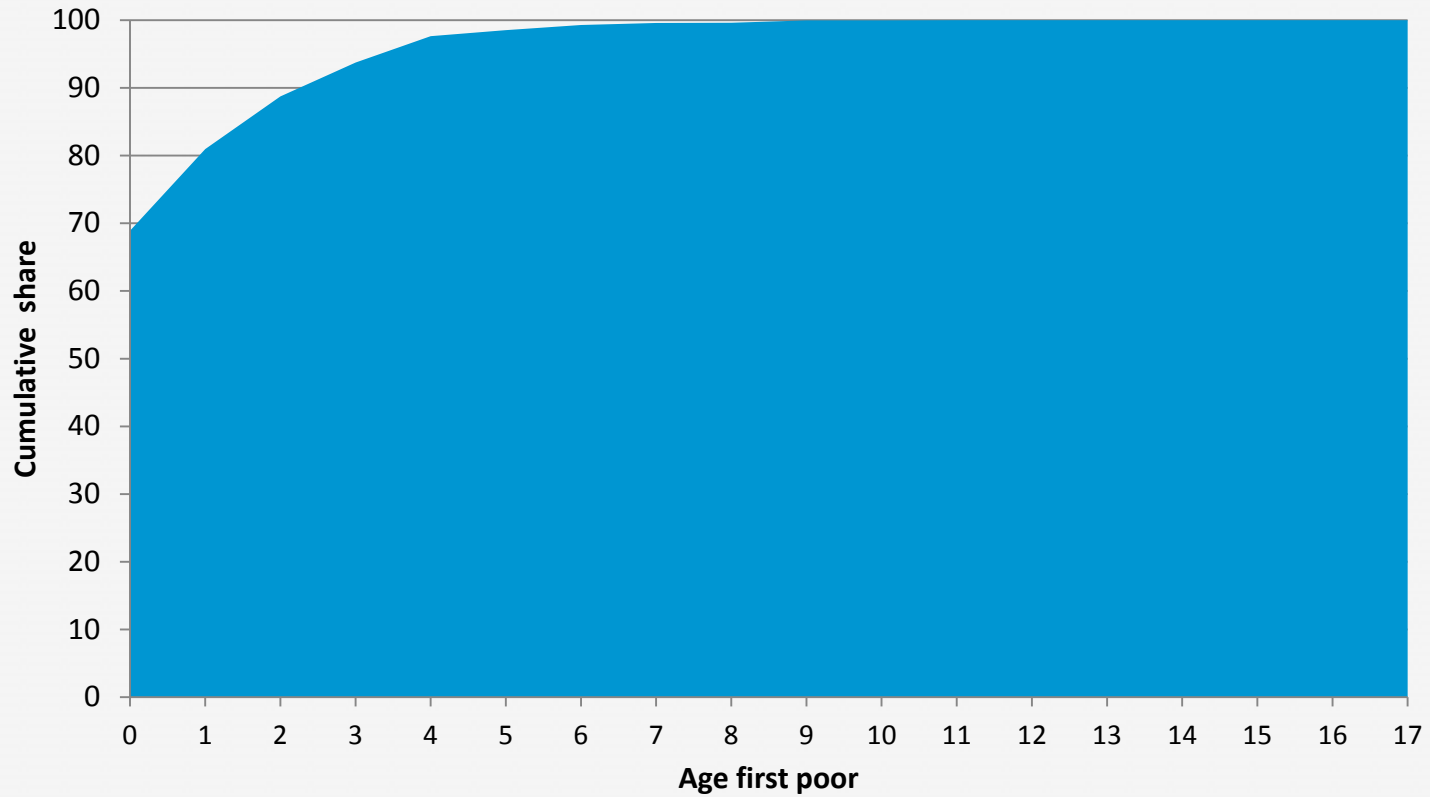
# Who are persistently poor children?

*Poor at least half of childhood*

*Share persistently poor*



# Persistently poor children experience poverty early



# Key questions

- What pathways do persistently poor children take in young adulthood (ages 19-30)?
  - Patterns of work/school attendance (“connected”)?
  - Patterns of poverty status?
- What characteristics differentiate persistently poor children who are most (vs. less) successful as young adults?

# Following the lives of children

- Data: Panel Study of Income Dynamics
  - Tracks the same families over 45 years
- Follow children from birth to age 30
  - Children born from late 1960s to early 1980s
- Trajectory analyses to examine pathways in young adulthood



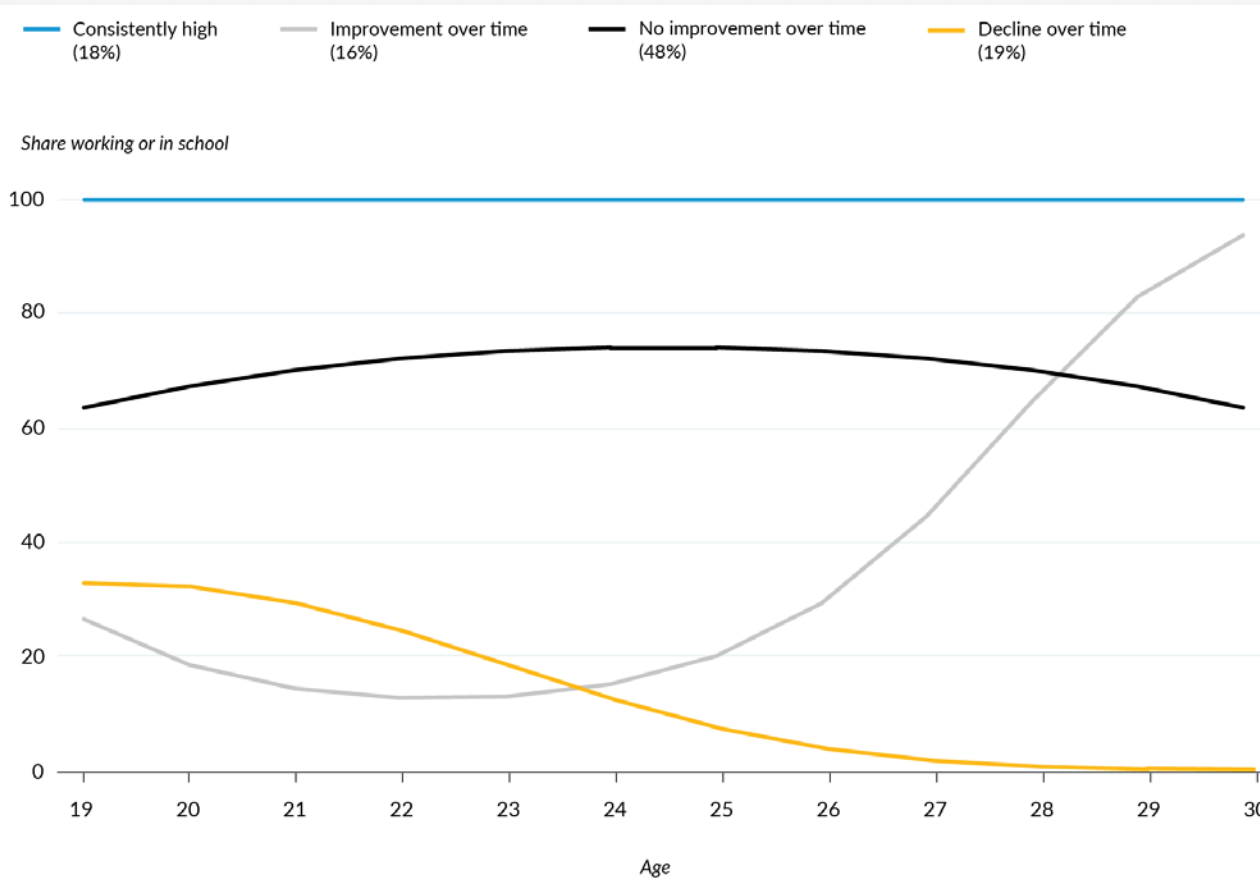
# What pathways do persistently poor children take in young adulthood?

- Connected: working or in school
- Poverty status



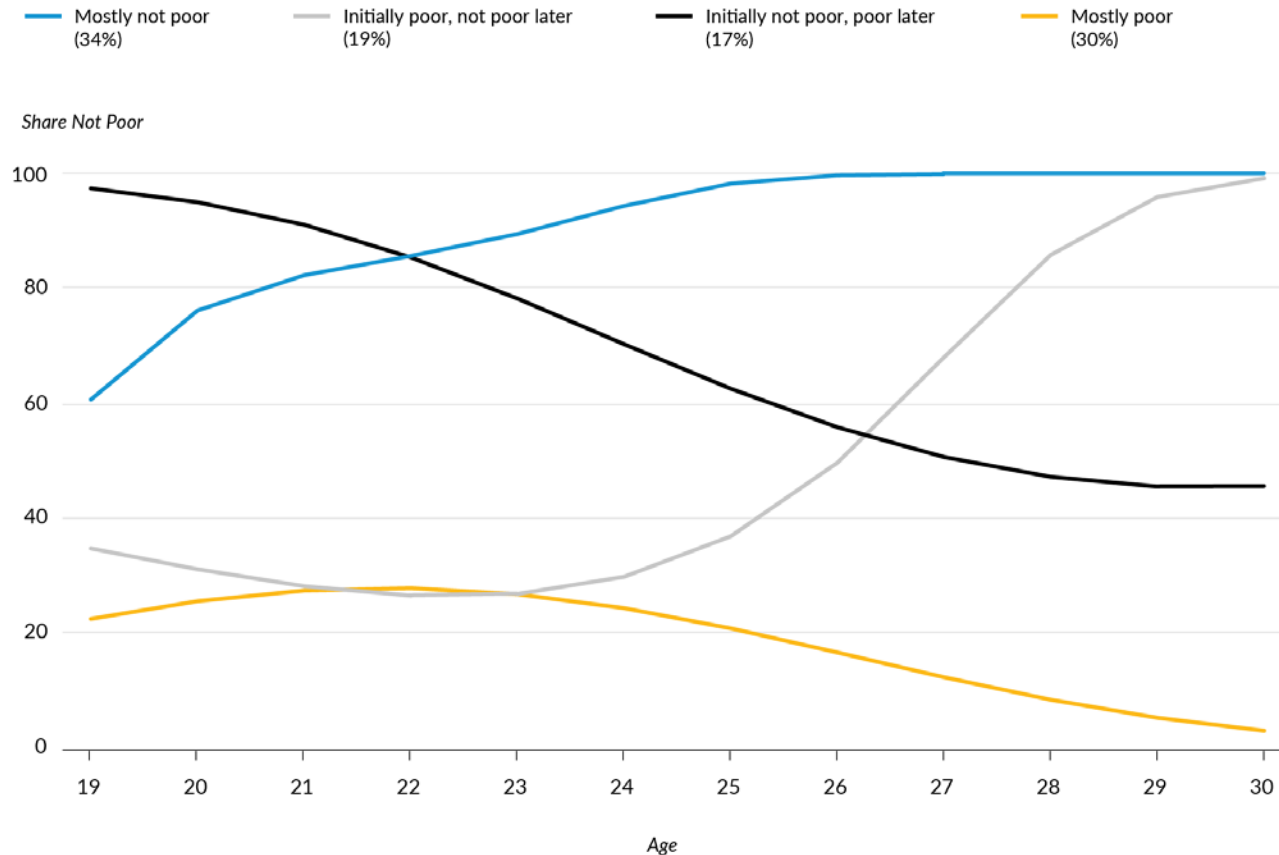
# Four key patterns of connectedness

## *Among those persistently poor as a child*



# Four key patterns of poverty

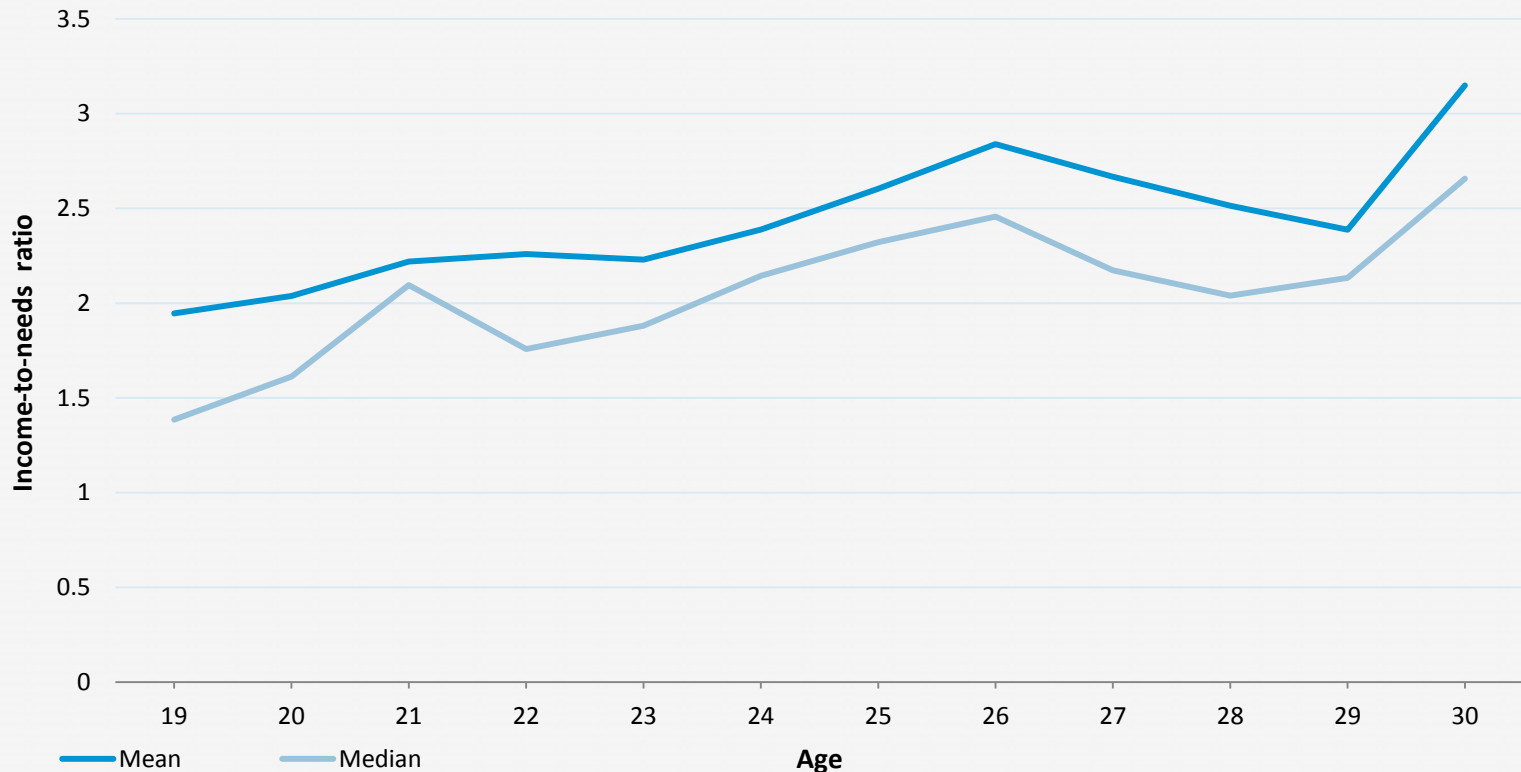
## *Among those persistently poor as a child*





# Economic circumstances improve with age

*Among those in the “mostly not poor” group*



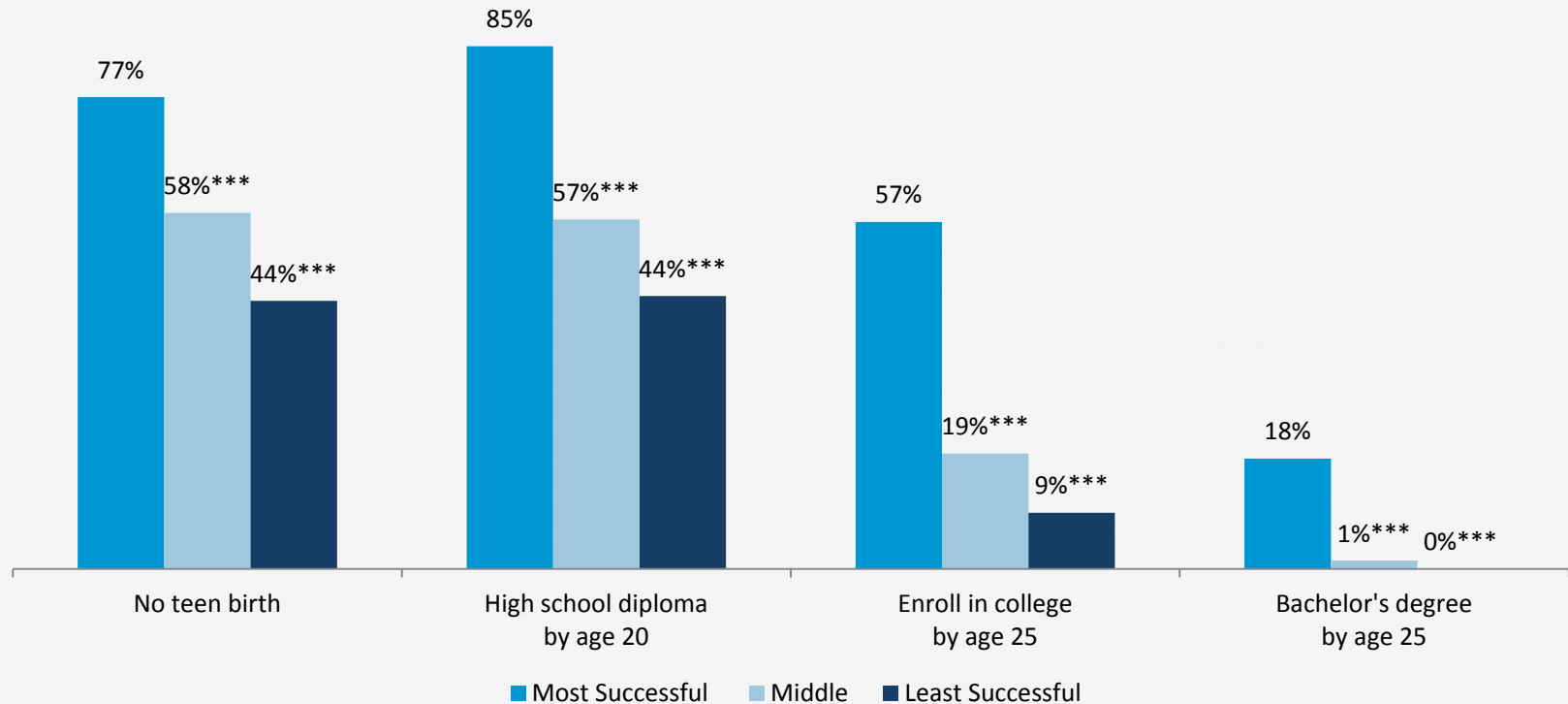
# What characteristics differentiate those most successful as young adults?

*Three groups:*

- Most successful (connected and not poor)
- Middle
- Least successful (not connected and poor)

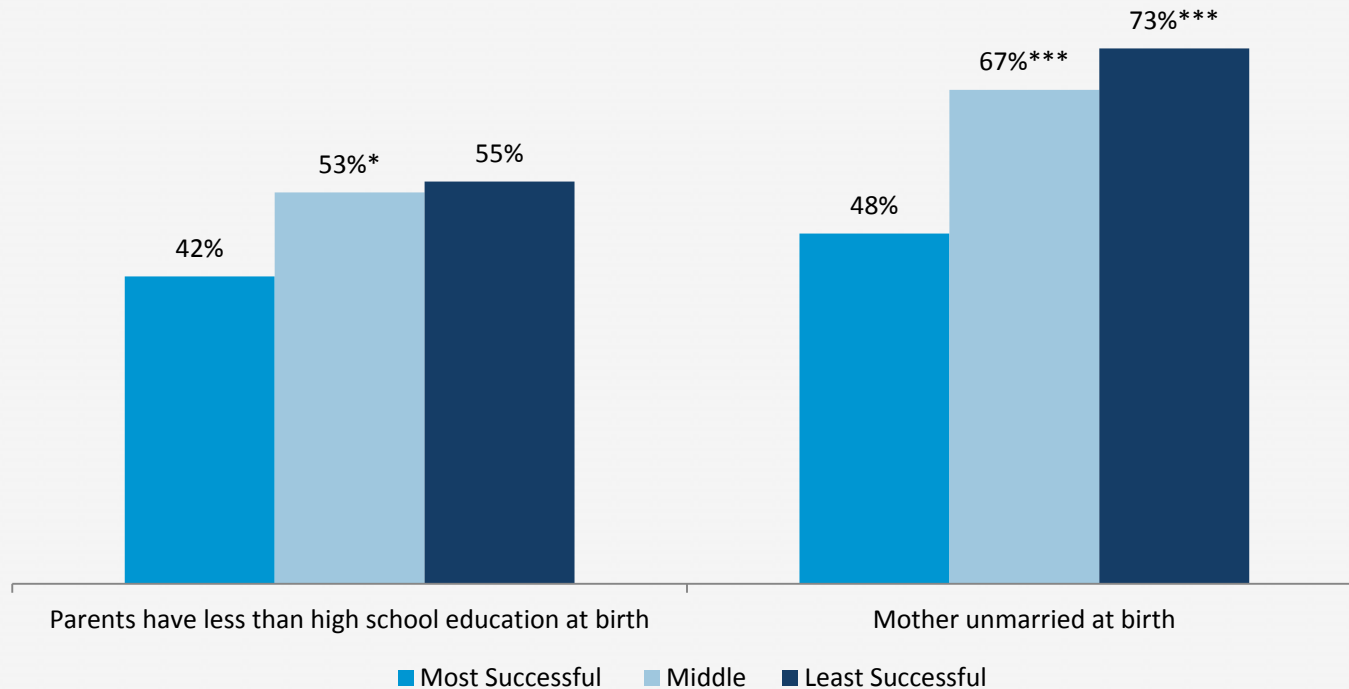


# Fewer teen births and more education for the most successful young adults



Notes: The most successful group includes young adults in both the “consistently high” connectedness group and the “mostly not poor” poverty group. Statistical significance for “most successful” vs “middle” and “most successful” vs “least successful.” \*\*\* p<0.01

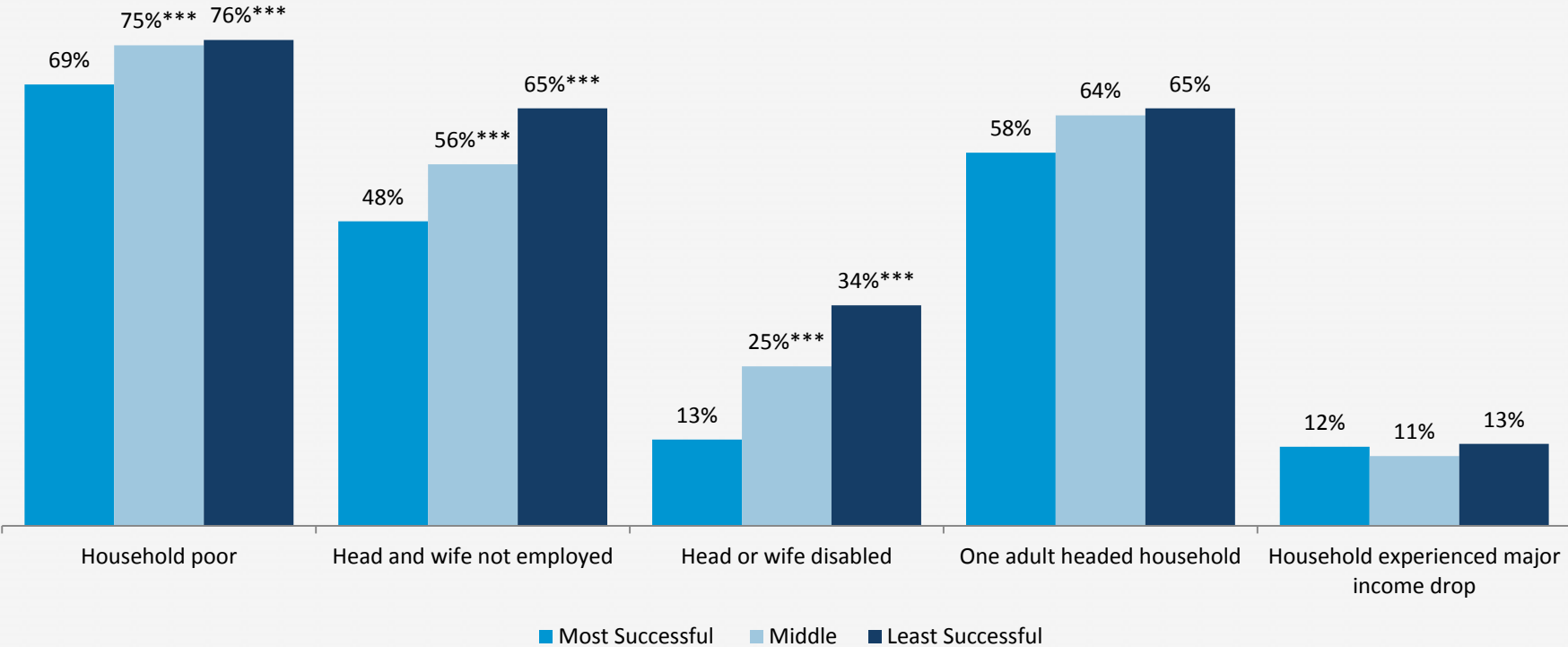
# Parents' education and marital status are related to children's future success



Notes: The most successful group includes young adults in both the “consistently high” connectedness group and the “mostly not poor” poverty group. Statistical significance for “most successful” vs “middle” and “most successful” vs “least successful.” \* p<0.1, \*\*\* p<0.01

# Household poverty, employment, and disability are related to children's future success

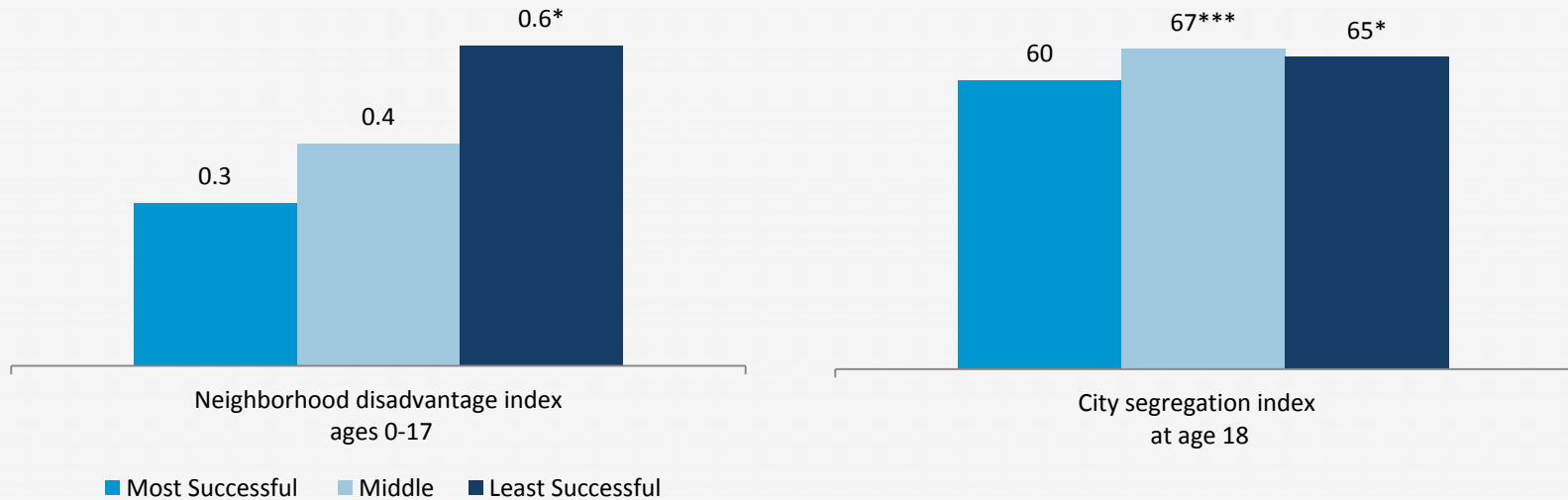
Share of years age 0-17



Notes: The most successful group includes young adults in both the “consistently high” connectedness group and the “mostly not poor” poverty group. Statistical significance for “most successful” vs “middle” and “most successful” vs “least successful.” \*\*\* p<0.01



# Neighborhood quality and city segregation are related to children's future success



Notes: The most successful group includes young adults in both the “consistently high” connectedness group and the “mostly not poor” poverty group. Statistical significance for “most successful” vs “middle” and “most successful” vs “least successful.” \* p<0.1, \*\*\* p<0.01

# Summary

- Persistently poor children experience poverty early in life
- Among persistently poor children:
  - 1 in 5 is consistently working or in school in young adulthood
  - 1 in 3 is mostly not poor in young adulthood
- Household and neighborhood characteristics matter among persistent poor children
  - Beyond family income and employment, children with disabled parents are less likely to succeed