Pathways of Persistently Poor Children
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Strong Foundations: The Economic Futures of Kids and Communities
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Who are persistently poor children?

*Poor at least half of childhood*

**Share persistently poor**

- All: 11.8%
- White: 5.5%
- Black: 40.1%
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

![Graph showing four key patterns of connectedness](image)

- Consistently high (18%)
- Improvement over time (16%)
- No improvement over time (48%)
- Decline over time (19%)
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

![Graph showing income-to-needs ratio by age]
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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outcome</th>
<th>Most Successful</th>
<th>Middle</th>
<th>Least Successful</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No teen birth</td>
<td>77%</td>
<td>58%***</td>
<td>44%***</td>
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<tr>
<td>High school diploma by age 20</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>57%***</td>
<td>44%***</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bachelor’s degree by age 25</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>1%***</td>
<td>0%***</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

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

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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