

# Program on Neighborhoods and Youth Development



Overview, August 2010

## CHA Families and the Plan for Transformation

## The CHA's Plan for Transformation *How Have Residents Fared?*

Susan J. Popkin, Diane K. Levy, Larry Buron,  
Megan Gallagher, and David J. Price

*"The goal of the Plan  
for Transformation  
was to convert  
distressed public  
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communities."*

This series presents findings from the *Chicago Panel Study*, a follow up to the Urban Institute's five-site *HOPE VI Panel Study*, the only national study of outcomes for families affected by HOPE VI revitalization (Popkin et al. 2002). The HOPE VI Panel Study tracked resident outcomes across a broad range of domains from 2001 to 2005.<sup>1</sup> The Chicago Panel Study is continuing to track the 198 sample households from the Chicago Housing Authority's (CHA) Madden/Wells Homes.

The CHA's Plan for Transformation, launched in October 1999, was an ambi-

tious effort to transform the agency's distressed public housing developments, replacing most with mixed-income communities and comprehensively rehabilitating the remaining properties. The ultimate goal of the Plan for Transformation was to demonstrate that it was possible to convert distressed public housing into healthy communities that would provide residents with opportunities for a better life.<sup>2</sup>

The challenges the CHA faced in attempting to transform its public housing were immense. The agency was one of the largest housing authorities in the country and had an extraordinary number of distressed units—its plans called for demolishing or rehabilitating 25,000 units in all. The CHA's troubles were the result of decades of neglect, poor management, and overwhelming crime and violence. Further, CHA's residents were especially disadvantaged: because of the terrible conditions in CHA's family developments, many tenants who had better options had left long ago, leaving behind a population dominated by extremely vulnerable families (Popkin et al. 2000). And, like most housing authorities, when the CHA began implementing its

HOPE VI stands for Housing Opportunities for People Everywhere. Created by Congress in 1992, the HOPE VI program was designed to address not only the bricks-and-mortar problems in severely distressed public housing developments, but the social and economic needs of the residents and the health of surrounding neighborhoods. The program was reauthorized in 2009 as part of the Choice Neighborhoods Initiative Act. Between 1993 and 2008, 247 distressed public housing developments located in 130 communities in 34 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico have received HOPE VI grants to effect redevelopment. Chicago is the largest recipient of HOPE VI funds.

The Chicago Panel Study research was supported with a grant from the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation. Information on crime rates was used by permission from Professor Wesley Skogan of Northwestern University.

revitalization plans, the agency had little experience in providing case management or relocation counseling and struggled with developing adequate services. The agency negotiated a Relocation Rights Contract with its resident leadership in 2000 that formally spelled out the CHA's obligations to leaseholders during the transformation, including the services to be offered to residents while they waited for permanent housing. By the time the CHA moved into the later phases of relocation in Madden/Wells, the agency's relocation and supportive service system had evolved to become unusually comprehensive, and included both relocation counseling and case management (Popkin 2010).

In October 2009, the CHA marked the 10th anniversary of the Plan for Transformation. The changes that the plan has wrought over the past decade have been dramatic and have changed the city's landscape. Most striking is the absence of the massive high-rises that dominated some of the city's poorest neighborhoods for half a century. These developments have been replaced with new mixed-income communities that represent the best current thinking on how to create affordable housing without creating pockets of concentrated poverty. But while the physical impact of the CHA's transformation is evident, the impact on the families that had lived in CHA's distressed developments—and endured its worst days—has been less visible (Popkin 2010).

The purpose of the Chicago Panel Study is to track the circumstances of CHA residents to assess how they are faring as the Plan for Transformation progresses. Overall, as this series of briefs documents, we find that, after 10 years, the story for CHA families is far more positive than many observers—including ourselves—would have predicted at the outset.<sup>3</sup> Regardless of where they have moved, most families in our study are living in considerably better circumstances. However, the study also highlights the serious challenges that remain, most significantly, residents' extremely poor health and persistently low rates of employment.

Further, despite their improved quality of life, most CHA families continue to live in poor, predominantly African-American communities that offer limited access to economic and educational opportunity.

## Chicago Panel Study

The Chicago Panel Study tracks the living conditions and well-being of residents from Chicago's Madden/Wells homes. Built between 1941 and 1970, Madden/Wells was one of the CHA's largest public housing complexes, made up of 3,000 public housing units in four developments: the Ida B. Wells Homes, a low-rise development first opened in 1941 to house black war workers; the Wells Extensions; Madden Homes; and the high-rise Darrow Homes (Bowly 1978). The complex was located on the near south side of the city, close to Lake Michigan on the east and to the sites of the former Robert Taylor and Stateway Gardens Homes on the west.

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) awarded the CHA a \$35 million HOPE VI grant in 2000 to convert the Madden/Wells site into a mixed-income community. The CHA used a staged relocation process for the development, closing sections as new units came on line; in 2005, 40 percent of the Chicago Panel Study sample were still living in the partially demolished site. Over the next several years, rapidly deteriorating conditions led the agency to accelerate the relocation process and close the development in August 2008. All of the public housing on the site is now demolished and a new mixed-income community called Oakwood Shores is gradually rising in its place.

For the HOPE VI Panel Study baseline in summer 2001, we surveyed a random sample of 198 Madden/Wells heads of household and conducted in-depth, qualitative interviews with seven adults and seven children. We followed up the sample in 2003 (24 months after the baseline), surveying 174 heads of household (88 percent response rate) and interviewing six adults and six children. At the second follow-up in 2005 (48 months after the baseline), we

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*“After 10 years, the story for CHA families is far more positive than we would have predicted in 2001.”*

surveyed 165 heads of household (83 percent response rate) and interviewed eight adults and seven children. For the Chicago Panel Study, we conducted a third follow up in 2009, completing surveys with 136 Madden/Wells heads of household (69 percent response rate) and interviews with nine adults and nine children. The largest source of attrition between 2005 and 2009 was mortality; we were able to locate, if not survey, nearly all sample members.<sup>4</sup>

### 2005: A Glass Half Empty?

At the final round of the HOPE VI Panel Study in 2005, we concluded that in Chicago, as in the other four sites, the redevelopment effort had had some important successes—most residents living the private market with vouchers were living in better housing in safer neighborhoods. Relatively few had returned to live in the new mixed-income housing development, but those who had were faring well. However, there were reasons for concern: residents' health was extremely poor, mortality rates were worryingly high, and many former residents living in the private market were experiencing material hardship, particularly difficulty in paying their utilities. Further, 40 percent of the respondents were still living on-site in Madden/Wells and enduring rapidly deteriorating conditions as building systems failed and drug dealers and gangs moved into the vacant units. Many of those left behind were among the most vulnerable families—those with serious physical and mental health issues and complex family problems. The children in these households appeared to be struggling, with parents' reports indicating rising rates of delinquency and risky behavior, especially for girls (Popkin 2010).

### Four Years Later, an Improved Quality of Life for Most Families

By 2009, all of the original respondents had been out of Madden/Wells for at least a year, and some had been out for as long as

eight years. The majority of former residents were using vouchers to rent a unit in the private market (54 percent), nearly a third were living in public housing (29 percent), and the rest were no longer receiving housing assistance (17 percent). More than half the residents that relocated to public housing (18 percent of all respondents) were living in one of the CHA's new mixed-income developments, mostly in Oakwood Shores. Less than 1 percent had become homeless.

The biggest and most striking change since 2005 is that *residents' circumstances have improved, regardless of the type of housing assistance they have*. In 2005, we found that residents who were living in the private market were faring far better than those who were still living in public housing. But in 2009, those differences have disappeared, and nearly all Madden/Wells respondents—even those who have moved to one of CHA's remaining traditional public housing developments—report living in better quality housing in safer neighborhoods.

- More than three-quarters of Madden/Wells respondents now say that their housing is in excellent or good condition and, in sharp contrast to 2005, no public housing residents rate their housing as "poor."<sup>5</sup> Nearly all (84 percent) rate their housing as better than where they lived in Madden/Wells. The proportion reporting two or more serious housing-quality problems has declined from nearly 80 percent in 2001 to 19 percent in 2009. Stunningly, those who relocated to a traditional public housing development report almost no problems with their units, while residents who are renting in the private sector with a voucher report the most problems overall, though the level is still substantially lower than when they lived in Madden/Wells.
- Madden/Wells families live in considerably lower-crime neighborhoods where they no longer constantly fear for their own and their children's safety. Respondents' perceptions of violence

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*"Residents' circumstances have improved across the board."*

and disorder in their neighborhoods have decreased significantly across every measure we tracked. For example, in 2001, more than 70 percent of the respondents rated each of four indicators of social disorder (drug trafficking, sales, loitering, and gangs) a big problem; in 2009, fewer than 25 percent viewed these issues as a major problem in their community. Likewise, the proportion of respondents who rated three indicators of violence (shootings and violence, attacks, and sexual assault) as a big problem decreased by more than half. Finally, complaints of big problems with physical disorder (trash and graffiti) in 2009 were 40 percentage points lower than they were in 2001. Official crime statistics support respondents' perceptions; on average, they now live in communities where the crime rate is half the level reported in Madden/Wells in 2001.

- In 2005, we raised serious concerns about the youth whose families were still living in Madden/Wells. But in 2009, we find a more hopeful picture overall, especially for young adults (ages 18 to 22), many of whom appear to have aged out of many of the problems their parents reported in 2005. In general, young women appear to be faring better than young men, and, surprisingly, there are no longer any differences between those whose families are living in traditional public housing and those whose families are in the private market. However, our data also indicate that a worrying proportion of these young people have faced the prospect of parenting: 8 percent of school-age youth and 28 percent of young adults have gotten pregnant or gotten someone else pregnant.
- Finally, although their quality of life has improved substantially, and just over 25 percent now live in low-poverty communities where the poverty rate is less than 15 percent, most Madden/Wells families still live in neighborhoods that are poor and predominantly African-American.

## Significant Challenges Remain

The 2009 Chicago Panel Study shows that CHA families' well-being has improved in important ways—they now live in substantially higher-quality housing and in dramatically safer neighborhoods than the Madden/Wells development. At the same time, the study also highlights the significant challenges that remain—particularly CHA residents' shockingly poor health and persistently low levels of employment—problems that will require more intensive, focused interventions.

- Since 2005, respondents' health has continued to deteriorate rapidly; the levels of reported health problems in 2009 are stunning and the mortality rate is shockingly high. At each wave of the Panel Study, we asked respondents to rate their health on a five-point scale from "excellent" to "poor." In 2009, Madden/Wells respondents' ratings of their overall health were significantly worse than the already-bad ratings of previous years. In 2009, *more than half* (51 percent) of respondents identified their health as "fair" or "poor," up from 37 percent in 2001 and four times as high as the rate for the general population. More than half suffer from two or more serious chronic conditions (e.g., diabetes, hypertension, obesity), and respondents report severe difficulty in carrying out activities of daily living (e.g., walking up a flight of stairs) at rates well above national averages. They also suffer high rates of serious mental health problems, with 17 percent reporting poor overall mental health and 8 percent reporting major depression. The one bright spot in all of this bad news is that respondents in 2009 reported a reduction in anxiety issues after relocation—possibly because of improved safety: 17 percent reported having anxiety episodes in the 2009 follow-up, a significant decrease from the 2001 baseline, when 28 percent reported experiencing anxiety.
- The CHA has increased efforts to promote self-sufficiency for its residents

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*"Significant challenges remain: CHA residents' shockingly poor health and persistently low employment."*



through its FamilyWorks case management services and Opportunity Chicago, whose goal is to connect CHA residents to the labor force.<sup>6</sup> In its boldest move, the agency introduced a work requirement for all residents of its traditional public housing properties in January 2009. Our findings in 2009 indicate that employment rates for Madden/Wells respondents remain persistently low, although these rates reflect considerable cycling in and out of the labor market. Not surprisingly, poor health remains the biggest barrier to employment. However, although employment rates have not increased, there has been some increase in household income. Finally, we find that the work requirement may have begun influencing residents' behavior, as respondents report having enrolled in job training or work readiness classes.

- Madden/Wells respondents continue to report experiencing considerable economic hardship, particularly difficulty in paying utilities and worrying about running out of food. As in 2005, it appears that respondents might be making trade-offs, choosing to pay their rent on time to remain lease compliant and delaying utility payments.
- Finally, although no former residents currently live in a community where the poverty rate approaches that of Madden/Wells (72 percent), more than half live in a census tract with a poverty rate greater than 25 percent, and virtually none live in racially diverse communities. While certainly an improvement over distressed public housing, these racially and economically segregated neighborhoods still offer little opportunity for residents to improve their economic circumstances.

## **Implications for Policy and Practice**

After the four-year HOPE VI Panel Study follow-up of 2005, we questioned whether CHA's Plan for Transformation would have a mixed legacy for residents, with for-

mer residents who had received vouchers or succeeded in moving into mixed-income housing far better off, and those left behind in traditional public housing still living in unacceptably poor conditions (Popkin 2010). In light of those earlier findings, the findings from the 2009 eight-year follow-up are truly stunning; there is no question that, regardless of where they live, CHA relocatees' quality of life has improved dramatically. The CHA's transformation efforts have achieved the goal of making sure that CHA families no longer have to endure deplorable housing conditions and constant fear from living with overwhelming levels of violent crime and disorder. The fact that significant challenges remain does not undermine the magnitude of this achievement.

However, to build on these accomplishments and make sure these gains are not lost, the CHA will need to continue its aggressive focus on improving management and resident services.

- The CHA must recognize that these gains, however impressive, are fragile. To sustain these improvements, the CHA must remain vigilant about monitoring the private companies that now manage its mixed-income and traditional public housing developments. Further, the CHA must continue to work with the Chicago Police Department to ensure that CHA properties remain safe and decent places for its residents to live. Finally, the housing authority should continue funding its comprehensive resident service programs to ensure that troubled residents receive the support they need to reduce the chance that they could create serious problems that threaten overall conditions in their developments or put them at risk of losing their housing.
- The CHA should ensure that its supportive services and relocation programs include a focus on youth. In particular, services should help children and youth transition to new neighborhoods and schools. In addition to helping youth adjust to their new

communities, this strategy will help support management and reduce problems with crime and disorder.

- The CHA should also make an aggressive effort to address the health crisis among its families. The agency should explore partnerships with the Department of Public Health and local health care providers, as well as other options, such as public health interventions, that train residents to be community health workers. The CHA should also work to promote healthy living and physical activity, acknowledging that residents will not be physically active unless they feel safe being outside in their community. Therefore, one critical thing the CHA can do is to sustain the safety improvements that have so improved the overall quality of life for residents of its public housing and mixed-income developments. The agency should also look for resources or partnerships to create recreation centers in or near its developments or potentially to provide “scholarships” for gym membership for CHA residents.
- The CHA should continue its efforts to connect residents to the workforce. Although we did not see a significant shift, our results make clear that even CHA residents who work often find it difficult to stay employed. Particularly during these tough economic times, these residents need support and incentives to continue to keep trying to achieve regular employment. The CHA should also consider alternative definitions of self-sufficiency for residents whose health or personal challenges make achieving regular employment unlikely.
- Finally, while conditions for CHA families have improved substantially as a result of relocation, the reality is that they continue to live in moderately poor, moderately high-crime, racially segregated neighborhoods that offer few real opportunities for themselves or their children. The CHA needs to continue exploring strategies that encourage fam-

ilies to move into low-poverty opportunity areas and continue reducing the barriers that prevent its residents from accessing the opportunities and services that these communities provide.

## Notes

1. For a full description of the HOPE VI Panel Study research and final results, see Popkin, Levy, and Buron (2009). For more detail, see the baseline report (Popkin et al. 2002) and the previous two series of Urban Institute policy briefs (<http://www.urban.org/projects/hopevi/index.cfm> and <http://www.urban.org/toolkit/policybriefs/subjectbriefs.cfm?documenttypeid=122>).
2. Chicago Housing Authority, “The Plan for Transformation,” [http://www.thecha.org/pages/housing\\_choice\\_voucher\\_program/pages/the\\_plan\\_for\\_transformation/22.php](http://www.thecha.org/pages/housing_choice_voucher_program/pages/the_plan_for_transformation/22.php).
3. See, for example, Bennett et al. (2006); Venkatesh et al. (2004); and Popkin and Cunningham (2005).
4. We used weights for all statistical analyses to account for differences in baseline characteristics among those who remained in the sample and those who had dropped out for reasons other than mortality. Of the 37 nonrespondents who are not deceased, 10 were contacted but not surveyed for reasons ranging from incapacitation to broken appointments. Among the other 27 people, 13 could not be found, 6 were receiving housing assistance according to CHA records, 4 had moved out of state, 1 was incarcerated, 1 refused to answer the door, and 2 were listed in CHA data as having an illness.
5. All reported differences in means and proportions are significant at the  $p < .10$  level unless otherwise noted.
6. Opportunity Chicago, <http://www.opportunitychicago.org/>

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## About the Authors



**Larry Buron** is a senior associate in Abt Associates' Housing and Community Revitalization Area.



**Megan Gallagher** is a research associate in the Urban Institute's Metropolitan Housing and Communities Policy Center.



**Diane K. Levy** is a senior research associate in the Urban Institute's Metropolitan Housing and Communities Policy Center.



**Susan J. Popkin** is director of the Urban Institute's Program on Neighborhoods and Youth Development and a senior fellow in the Metropolitan Housing and Communities Policy Center.



**David J. Price** is a research assistant in the Urban Institute's Metropolitan Housing and Communities Policy Center.

## **The Chicago Panel Study**

The Chicago Panel Study is a follow-up to the five-site HOPE VI Panel Study, which tracked resident outcomes from 2001 to 2005. The Chicago Panel Study continues to track the residents from the Chicago Housing Authority's Ida B. Wells Homes/Wells Extension and Madden Park Homes who were part of the original HOPE VI Panel sample. In October 2009, the CHA marked the 10th anniversary of the Plan for Transformation; the purpose of the Chicago Panel Study is to track the circumstances of the families in the Chicago HOPE VI Panel Study sample to assess how they are faring as the Plan for Transformation progresses.

Revitalization activities began in Madden/Wells in mid- to late 2001, and the last residents were relocated in August 2008. At the baseline in summer 2001, we surveyed a random sample of 198 heads of household and conducted in-depth, qualitative interviews with seven adults and seven children. We conducted follow-up surveys and interviews for the HOPE VI Panel Study in 2003 (n = 174, response rate 88 percent) and 2005 (n = 165, response rate 83 percent). In 2009, when we attempted to track the original Madden/Wells sample for the Chicago Panel Study, we surveyed 136 heads of household (response rate 69 percent) and conducted in-depth interviews with 9 adults and 9 children. The largest source of attrition between 2001 and 2009 was mortality; we were able to locate, if not survey, nearly all original sample members in the 2009 follow-up.

The principal investigator for the Chicago Panel Study is Susan J. Popkin, Ph.D., director of the Urban Institute's Program on Neighborhoods and Youth Development. Funding for this research was provided by the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation. Finally, we wish to thank the CHA, the many colleagues who have assisted with and commented on this research, and most of all, the Chicago Panel Study respondents, who have so generously shared their stories with us for so many years.

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## CHA Families and the Plan for Transformation

## After Wells *Where Are the Residents Now?*

Larry Buron and Susan J. Popkin

*“Chicago faced a set of circumstances that made relocation especially difficult.”*

Although many HOPE VI sites have found the task of resident relocation very challenging, Chicago faced a set of circumstances that made relocation especially difficult. Like most housing authorities, when the Chicago Housing Authority (CHA) began implementing its revitalization plans, the agency had little experience in providing case management or relocation services. Adding to the lack of experience, with 25,000 units to be “transformed” and tens of thousands of households to relocate, the magnitude of the problem was daunting. Finally, CHA’s residents were especially disadvantaged: because of the terrible conditions in CHA’s family developments, many tenants who had better options had left long ago, leaving behind a population dominated by extremely vulnerable families (Popkin et al. 2000). Not surprisingly, the CHA has struggled with relocation, and the process was initially very contentious, with two lawsuits filed against the agency and a court-appointed independent monitor overseeing relocation (Popkin 2006).

The Relocation Rights Contract, negotiated in 2000, formally spelled out the CHA’s obligations to leaseholders during

the transformation process. The contract defined the terms for lease compliance and the steps residents could take to “cure” lease violations and remain eligible to move into replacement housing in the new mixed-income developments. The contract also specified the services to be offered to residents while they waited for permanent housing. By the time the CHA began large-scale relocation in Madden/Wells, the agency’s relocation and supportive service system evolved to become unusually comprehensive and included relocation counseling and case management (Popkin 2010).

The CHA’s HOPE VI plans for Madden/Wells called for demolishing the entire development—nearly 3,000 units in three adjacent developments—and replacing it with a new mixed-income community called Oakwood Shores. In Madden/Wells, unlike most of its other HOPE VI sites, the CHA used a staged relocation plan, meaning that the site was not cleared before new construction began. Instead, the agency left original buildings standing and occupied, as other buildings were demolished and new housing was constructed on the site (Popkin 2010). The CHA did not complete relocation and close the development until

August 2008. In this brief, we address the question of what has happened to the original residents, including the type of housing assistance they received and where they lived in 2009, eight years after the Madden/Wells redevelopment started.

### Most Former Madden/Wells Respondents Have Vouchers

At the 2005 follow-up, 40 percent of Chicago Panel Study respondents were still living in Madden/Wells, awaiting relocation. Forty-five percent of the Chicago respondents had moved with a Housing Choice Voucher, 5 percent were living in the new mixed-income housing, about 7 percent were no longer receiving housing assistance, and less than 1 percent were homeless.

In 2009, Madden/Wells had been closed for a year and the picture was quite different.

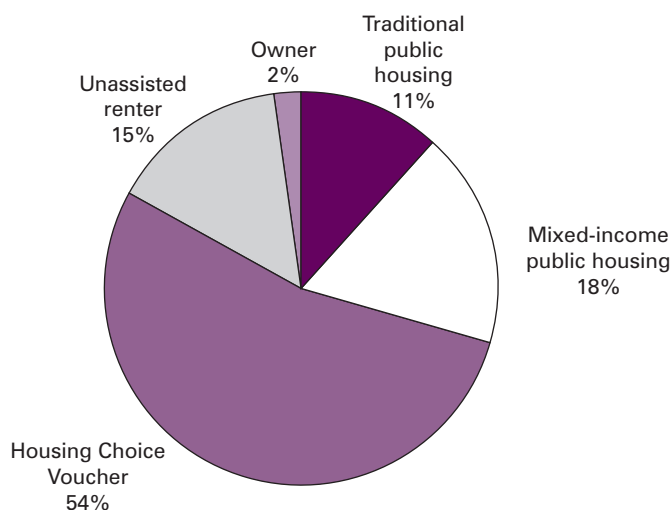
- As figure 1 shows, in 2009, a majority of the original Madden/Wells respondents were using vouchers to rent a unit in the private market (54 percent), nearly a third were living in public housing (29 percent), and the rest were no longer receiving housing assistance (17 percent).
- Of the respondents living in public housing, more than half (18 percent of all respondents) live in mixed-income public

housing. Most of these respondents live in Oakwood Shores, but a few have moved to other CHA mixed-income developments.

- Most respondents appear satisfied with their current housing choice. As figure 2 shows, about a third of the respondents who have not moved to mixed-income public housing reported that they would like to live in Oakwood Shores. While still a significant share of respondents, it is much smaller than the proportion of Madden/Wells respondents who wanted to live in Oakwood Shores in earlier rounds of the Panel survey. In 2001, the vast majority of respondents (79 percent) said they wanted to live in Oakwood Shores; this proportion declined to 58 percent in 2005 and is now 32 percent.<sup>1</sup> In-depth interviews conducted in 2009 show that many former Madden/Wells respondents had become used to their new living situation and their level of satisfaction was such that they no longer wanted to move back. Some interview respondents explicitly said they did *not* want to move to Oakwood Shores, citing their fears that the new development would have the same residents and thus the same crime and social disorder as Madden/Wells or their own reluctance to be subject to strict screening and occupancy policies.

*“Most former residents are satisfied with their housing choice.”*

FIGURE 1. Housing Assistance Status in 2009



Source: 2009 Chicago Panel Study Sample

## Proud to Have Left Public Housing

At baseline in 2001, Gwendolyn, a single parent with two sons, had lived in Madden/Wells for many years. She knew that it was not a good place to raise children, but she was comfortable there and did not know where else she could afford to live. She complained that her apartment was falling apart and the CHA did not make requested repairs. As she told the interviewer in 2001,

I like [my] apartment, the fact that it's up on the 11th. [floor]. What I don't like about the apartment is that they won't come up and fix things the way they should . . . like the plumbing, the electricity, and the wiring in the walls. It's all like falling apart. . . . Sometimes the tub backs up and the toilet stops up. . . .

Gwendolyn was among the first residents to relocate from Madden/Wells after the redevelopment began. She chose a Housing Choice Voucher, and by her own account, was both “scared and excited.” She has moved three times since she left Madden/Wells. For a time, she lived in a low-poverty, low-crime neighborhood on the Southwest Side, but most recently, opted to move further east to a higher-crime area to be closer to her sons’ school. She was able to rent a small house and says she has no desire to move back to a public housing development, even to Oakwood Shores. She feels at home in her house—and has a landlord that fixes things when they are broken. As she said in 2009,

I feel comfortable here. I'm happy. . . . I wanted to make sure the house wasn't in foreclosure, because you find out a lot of landlords don't tell you that the housing is in foreclosure. So, once I found out that it's not in foreclosure, I'm going to do little things to fit it up and make it more homey.

Further, Gwendolyn is very proud that she has made the transition to the private market and become more independent:

I think I'm a better person because I grew a little more mentally. I'm not around all of that negativity, you know, so I think I grew up a little bit and accept the responsibility. . . . A lesson I learned was that even though I have a voucher, and they do help me with my rent, but it was a time when I was paying like maybe \$75 a month rent. And now I'm paying like \$600 plus my light and my gas. So, I think moving has made me a little more responsible and I don't take things for granted like I used to. I can't take my money and say, look, I'm going to buy me four or five pairs of shoes because the light bill and the gas bill due. To whereas when I was over there [in Madden/ Wells] and my rent was only \$75, I think I was taking a lot of things for granted. So, I mean, as I grew, as I moved, it made me grow mentally.

## A Mixed Picture for Those Who No Longer Receive Assistance

As in 2005, the 2009 survey indicates a mixed picture for residents who no longer live in CHA-subsidized housing.

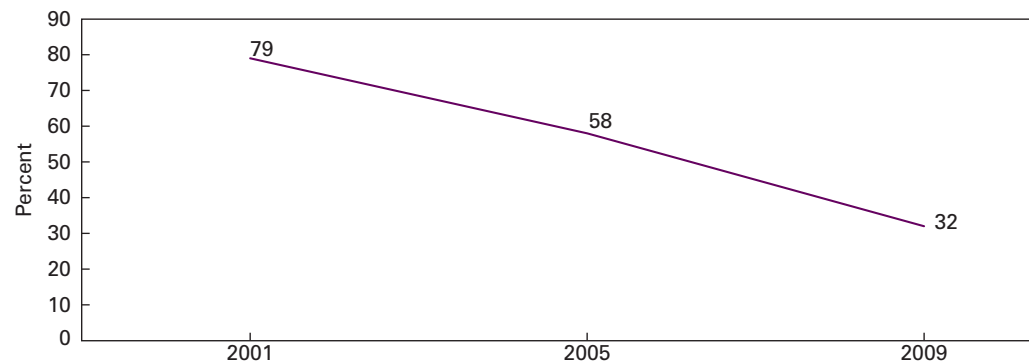
- Of the unassisted households who gave a reason for no longer receiving assistance, about a quarter cited positive reasons, such as their household income grew too high to be eligible or they got married and moved in with their partner. The rest cited negative reasons, such as breaking program rules or owing back rent or utilities, for why they no longer

had assistance. A small number of unassisted households (1 percent of the entire sample) reported being homeless at the time of the 2009 survey.

## Younger Residents Are Living in the Private Market

The 2009 follow-up shows that the characteristics of residents in different types of housing assistance vary considerably, with younger respondents more likely to choose vouchers and older respondents more likely to remain in public housing, either traditional or mixed-income developments.

FIGURE 2. Respondents Who Want to Live in the Oakwood Shores Mixed-Income Development (Excluding Residents Living in Mixed-Income Housing in 2009)



Source: 2009 Chicago Panel Study Sample

*“Former residents live in a diverse set of neighborhoods.”*

- Madden/Wells respondents in the private market (voucher holders or unassisted renters) were significantly more likely to be young (under age 34), to have had household incomes above \$10,000 in 2001, and less likely to be long-term public housing residents than the respondents who moved to traditional or mixed-income public housing developments. The majority of private-market renters (70 percent) have children (see table 1).
- Conversely, those living in mixed-income and traditional public housing in 2009 were more likely to be elderly than other respondents, and almost all of them (approximately 95 percent) were long-term public housing residents (10 years or more in public housing). Both public housing groups were also extremely low income, with only 14 percent of mixed-income residents and 18 percent of public housing residents having household incomes above \$10,000 in 2001.
- Finally, those in mixed-income developments were much more likely to have children than those in traditional public housing: 80 percent of mixed-income residents had children, compared with 44 percent of those in traditional public housing.

### Madden/Wells Respondents Live in a Diverse Set of Neighborhoods

The Madden/Wells community was located on the near South Side of the city,

close to Lake Michigan on the east and to the sites of the former Robert Taylor and Stateway Gardens Homes on the west. The development sat in the historic Bronzeville neighborhood, which was undergoing rapid gentrification after many years of decline (Popkin et al. 2008). In 2009, eight years after Madden/Wells redevelopment began, the former residents live in a diverse set of neighborhoods, although most still live on the South Side of the city. Some still live in high-poverty, racially isolated neighborhoods, but others live in relatively low-poverty and racially diverse neighborhoods (see table 2).

- Nearly all respondents still live in Chicago (94 percent) and more than half (55 percent) live within three miles of the former Madden/Wells housing development.
- Just over a quarter of the respondents have moved from a neighborhood with a 72 percent poverty rate (the Madden/Wells neighborhood in 2001) to a neighborhood with a poverty rate of 15 percent or less. However, as table 2 shows, a majority of the respondents (54 percent) still live in neighborhoods with poverty rates of 25 percent or higher—though none live in areas with poverty rates that approach that of the original Madden/Wells development.
- Four out of five former Madden/Wells residents still live in predominantly African-American neighborhoods

TABLE 1. Household Characteristics at Baseline (2001) by Housing Assistance (percent)

	Traditional public housing	Mixed-income public housing	Housing Choice Voucher	Unassisted renters	All former Madden/Wells residents
Age of respondent					
18–24	0	10	16	9	12
25–34	11	19	27	38	26
35–44	45	28	29	32	31
45–54	21	28	19	17	21
55–61	0	0	4	0	3
62 or older	23	15	5	5	9
Number of children in household					
No children	56	20	30	30	31
1 to 2 children	13	61	34	27	35
3 or more children	31	19	37	43	34
Children in household under age 6					
Yes	20	45	42	20	37
Length of time in public housing					
10 years or more	95	96	77	77	83
Annual household income					
More than \$10,000	19	14	26	21	22
High school graduate at baseline (2001)					
High school graduate	46	68	55	86	62

Sources: 2001 and 2009 Chicago Panel Study Samples.

Note: Sample size is 136.

(where more than 75 percent of residents are African-American) (figure 3).

- Madden/Wells respondents now live in much lower crime areas than the original development. However, as the map in figure 4 shows, most continue to live in areas with moderate to high crime relative to other Chicago neighborhoods (Popkin and Price 2010).
- Respondents who live in mixed-income developments—primarily Oakwood Shores—still live in neighborhoods that are poor and predominantly African-American. However, they were less likely than the other groups to live in the highest unemployment or highest crime neighborhoods.
- More unassisted than assisted households live in neighborhoods with relatively low poverty (figure 5) and unemployment rates (figure 6). For example, 43 percent of unassisted

households live in neighborhoods with a poverty rate less than 15 percent, compared with 35 percent of traditional public housing residents and 30 percent of voucher holders.

- Traditional public housing residents are the least likely group to live in predominantly African-American neighborhoods and, other than residents in mixed-income developments, the least likely to live in the highest crime neighborhoods. This finding may reflect the fact that many traditional public housing residents live in senior buildings located in lower crime, more racially diverse areas.

## Implications

After the follow-up in 2005, we found that very few respondents had moved to new mixed-income housing and two-



TABLE 2. *Neighborhood Characteristics by Housing Assistance (percent)*

	Traditional public housing	Mixed-income public housing	Housing Choice Voucher	Unassisted renters	All former Madden/Wells residents
<b>Neighborhood poverty rate</b>					
< 10%	0	0	7	16	6
10–15%	35	0	22	27	20
15–25%	21	9	19	28	20
> 25%	43	92	51	30	54
<b>Neighborhood unemployment rate</b>					
< 10%	0	4	16	16	12
10–15%	0	0	19	22	14
15–25%	79	84	48	34	56
> 25%	21	12	17	29	19
<b>Percent of persons in neighborhood that are African-American</b>					
< 15%	20	0	5	0	5
15–40%	0	0	6	0	3
40–75%	30	9	9	11	12
> 75%	51	92	81	89	81
<b>Neighborhood violent crime rate (per 1,000 people) in 2008</b>					
< 10 per 1,000	36	4	13	12	13
10 to 20 per 1,000	6	92	15	11	27
> 20 per 1,000	58	4	73	78	60

Sources: 2009 Chicago Panel Study Sample; rates of violent crimes are based on data collected and tabulated by the Metro Chicago Information Center.

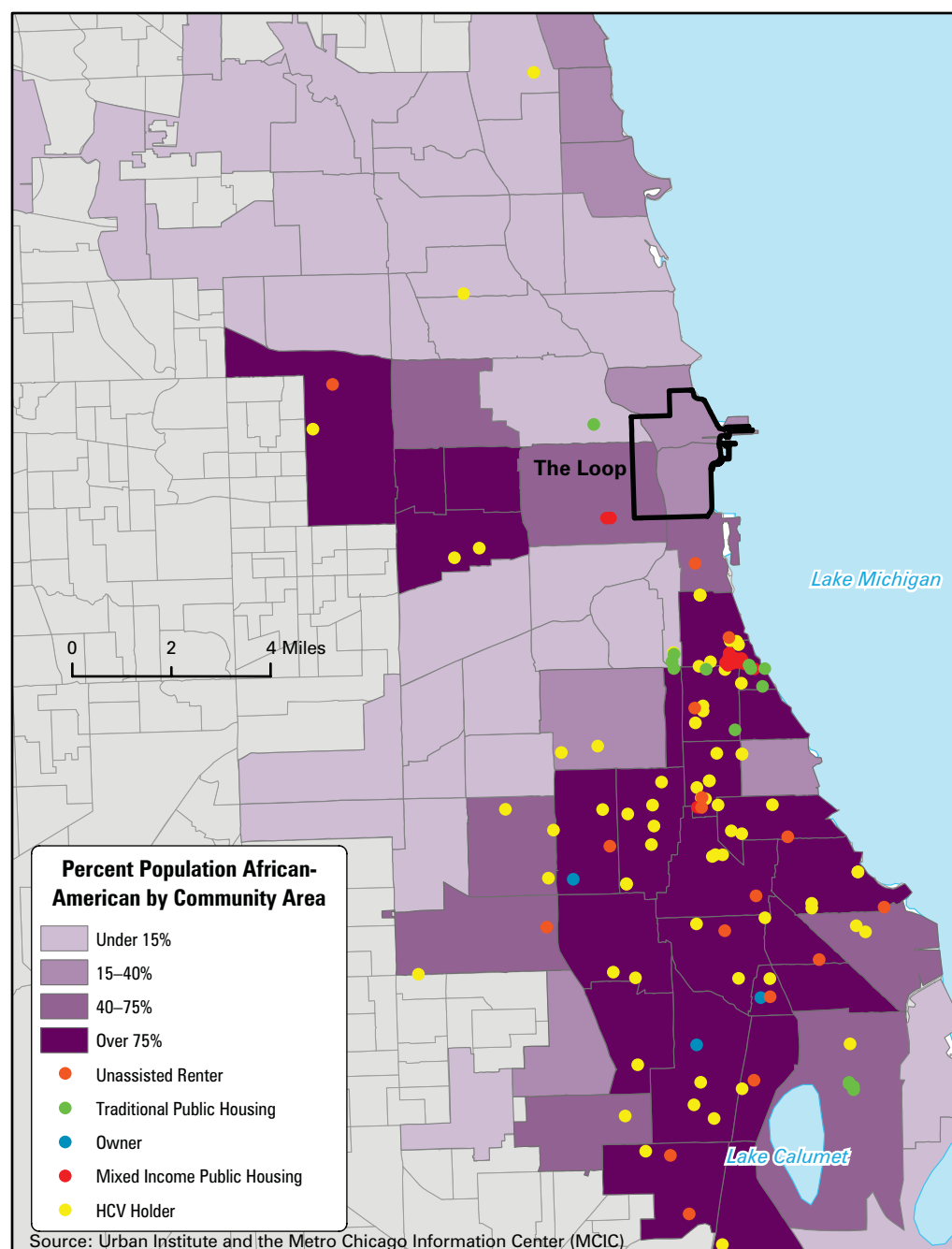
Notes: Sample size is 136. Poverty is defined as households with less than \$15,000 in income.

fifths were still living in buildings on an increasingly crime-ridden site. While those who had relocated with vouchers by 2005 generally lived in better quality housing and safer neighborhoods than Madden/Wells, we questioned whether the remaining residents would end up in traditional public housing developments with little to no improvements in their living conditions. However, by 2009, all of the residents had relocated and nearly one in five former Madden/Wells residents was living in a new mixed-income housing development. Most of the former Madden/Wells residents—regardless of their type of housing assistance—reported that their current housing and neighborhood was better than Madden/Wells. A

substantial minority lived in economically or racially diverse neighborhoods.

- While most respondents now live in better conditions, many respondents had to live in deteriorating conditions at Madden/Wells for too long after the redevelopment began. This finding suggests that staged relocation may not be a viable strategy when conditions—and crime rates—are extreme and that it is safer for residents if the development closes quickly.
- The CHA must recognize that the improved housing and safety conditions, however impressive, are fragile. To sustain these improvements, the CHA must remain vigilant about moni-

FIGURE 3. HOPE VI Relocates and Percent Population African-American, 2009



toring the private companies that now manage its mixed-income and traditional public housing developments.

- Finally, while conditions for voucher holders have improved substantially as a result of relocation, they continue to live in moderately poor, moderately high-crime, racially segregated neigh-

borhoods that offer few real opportunities for themselves and their children. The CHA needs to continue to explore strategies to encourage families to move to low-poverty opportunity areas, and to reduce the barriers that prevent its residents from accessing these communities.

FIGURE 4. HOPE VI Relocates and Violent Crime, 2008

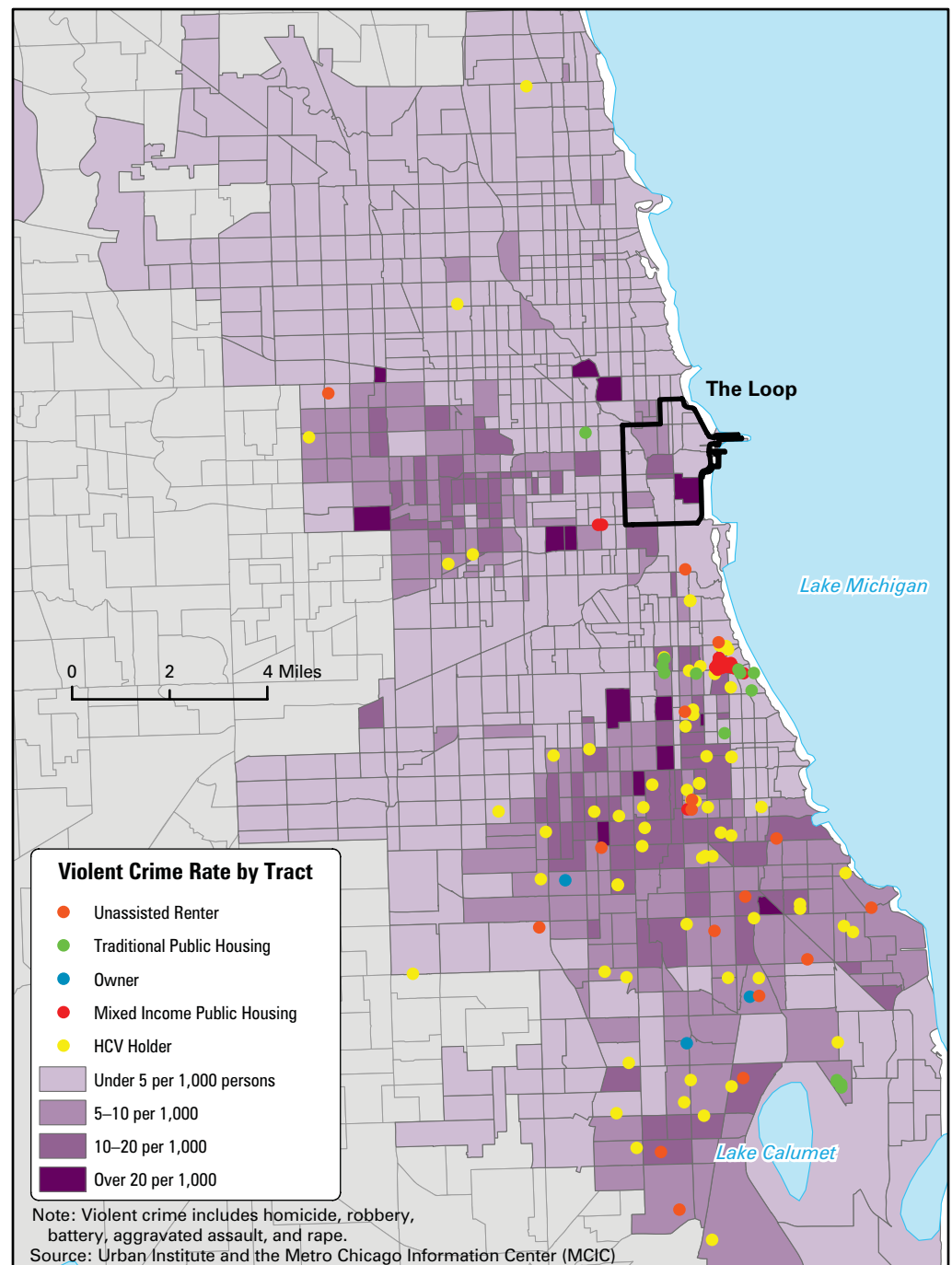


FIGURE 5. HOPE VI Relocates and Poverty, 2009

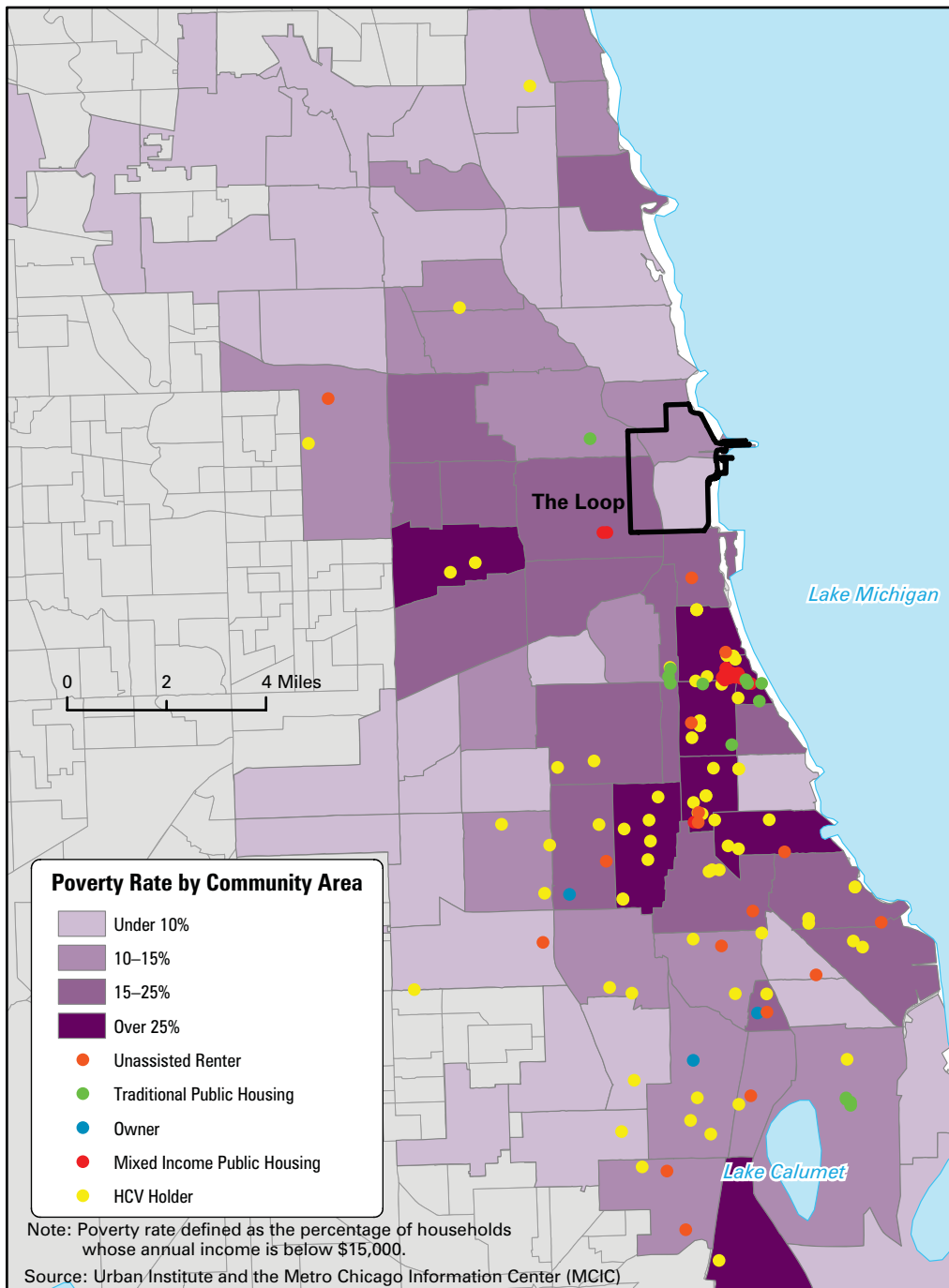
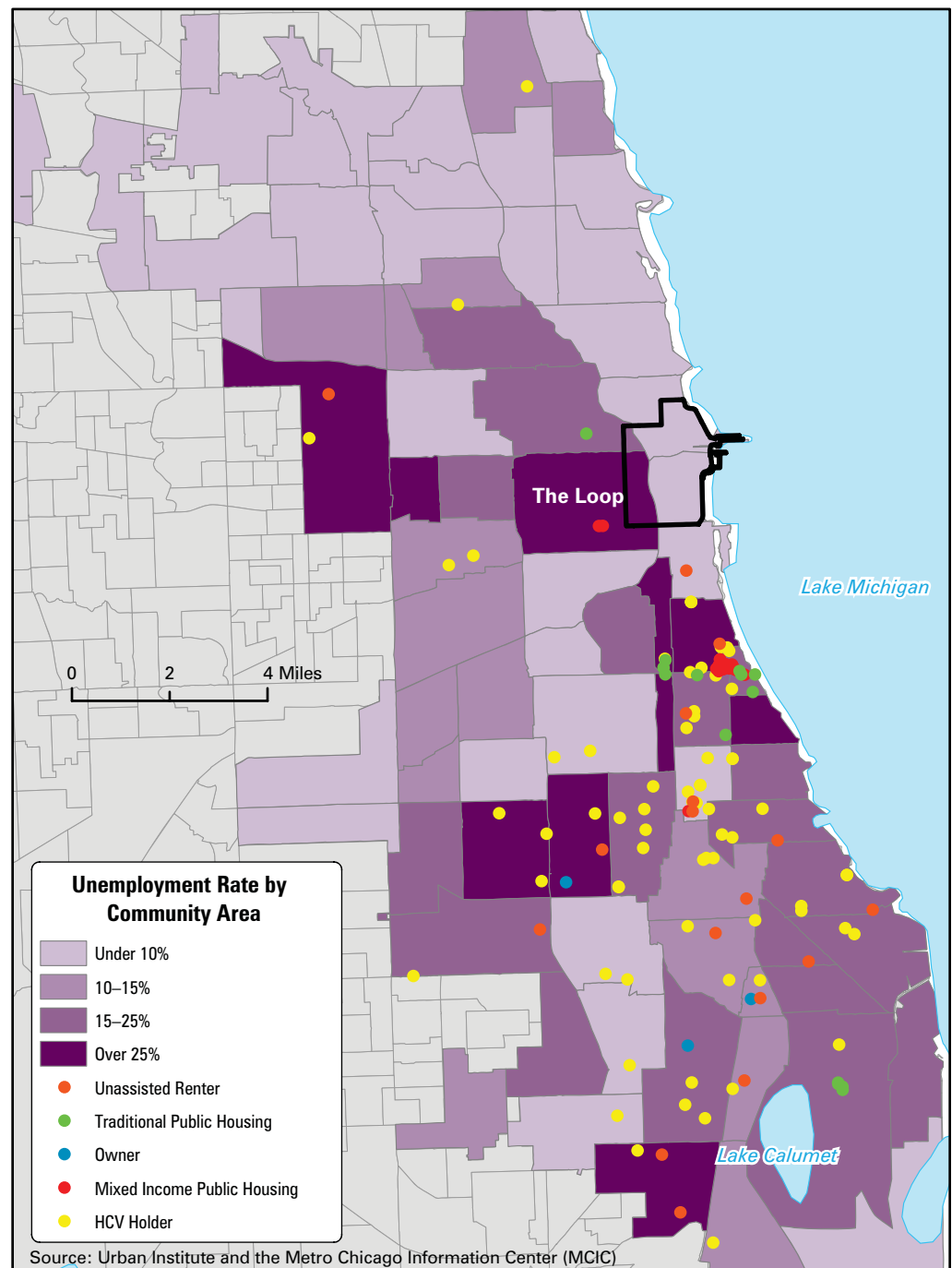


FIGURE 6. HOPE VI Relocates and Unemployment, 2009



## Note

1. All reported differences in means and proportions are significant at the  $p < .10$  level.

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## About the Authors



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Revitalization activities began in Madden/Wells in mid- to late 2001, and the last residents were relocated in August 2008. At the baseline in summer 2001, we surveyed a random sample of 198 heads of household and conducted in-depth, qualitative interviews with seven adults and seven children. We conducted follow-up surveys and interviews for the HOPE VI Panel Study in 2003 (n = 174, response rate 88 percent) and 2005 (n = 165, response rate 83 percent). In 2009, when we attempted to track the original Madden/Wells sample for the Chicago Panel Study, we surveyed 136 heads of household (response rate 69 percent) and conducted in-depth interviews with 9 adults and 9 children. The largest source of attrition between 2001 and 2009 was mortality; we were able to locate, if not survey, nearly all original sample members in the 2009 follow-up.

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## CHA Families and the Plan for Transformation

## Transformed Housing *Major Improvements in CHA Residents' Quality of Life*

Larry Buron and Susan J. Popkin

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*"In 2000,  
Madden/Wells was in  
deplorable condition."*

When the Chicago Housing Authority (CHA) launched its ambitious Plan for Transformation in 1999, it faced enormous challenges. For decades, the CHA had failed to meet even its most basic responsibilities as the city's largest landlord; by the 1990s, a combination of failed federal policies, managerial incompetence, financial malfeasance, basic neglect, and a troubled resident population had left its developments in an advanced state of decay. CHA families lived in an environment that exposed them to such hazards as lead paint, mold, cockroaches, rats and mice, broken plumbing, exposed radiators, and broken light fixtures. They had to cope with broken elevators and darkened stairwells and elevators that put them at risk for injury or assault (Popkin et al. 2000). The Madden/Wells development was no exception; by the time the CHA received a HOPE VI grant in 2000 to revitalize the Madden/Wells community, the development was in deplorable condition, with many units with water leaks, mold and mildew damage, and broken heating.

One of the primary goals of the CHA's Plan for Transformation—and for the

HOPE VI program overall—was to provide an improved living environment for residents of severely distressed public housing (Popkin, Levy, and Buron 2009). The CHA's HOPE VI plans for Madden/Wells, as for most of their other distressed developments, called for demolishing the development—nearly 3,000 units in three adjacent developments—and replacing them with a new mixed-income community called Oakwood Shores. In Madden/Wells, unlike most of its other HOPE VI sites, the CHA used a staged relocation plan, meaning that the site was not cleared before new construction began. Instead, the agency left original buildings standing and occupied, as other buildings were demolished and new housing was constructed on the site (Popkin 2010). The CHA did not complete relocation and close the development until August 2008.

When we followed up on the CHA Panel Study sample in 2005, four years after the Panel Study baseline and the beginning of relocation, the picture for residents' quality of life was mixed. Respondents' reports of their housing conditions varied considerably according to where they lived. Those

who had moved with a Housing Choice Voucher—the largest share of the residents at 44 percent of the sample—reported living in substantially better conditions in 2005 than in 2001. For example, the proportion of voucher movers reporting two or more problems with their housing like broken plumbing, mold, and peeling paint fell from 83 percent at the baseline to just 26 percent in 2005. The vast majority (81 percent) reported that their new housing was better than where they lived before they moved. The respondents who relocated to new mixed-income housing (5 percent) also reported very good living conditions, while the reports of those who had moved but were no longer receiving housing assistance (7 percent) were mixed, with most still rating their housing better than at baseline. However, while conditions for movers had improved, the situation for the 40 percent of respondents still living in Madden/Wells and awaiting relocation had not changed since 2001. Most were still living in substandard—and potentially dangerous—housing, with about 70 percent continuing to report two or more problems with their housing in 2005.

In 2009, eight years after the baseline, Madden/Wells was closed and all residents had been relocated. Most (54 percent) had vouchers and were renting in the private market, 18 percent had moved into a mixed-income development, and 12 percent were living in a traditional public housing development. The rest (17 percent)

were no longer receiving housing assistance. Since 2005, the CHA had made significant progress on the mixed-income developments that were replacing its distressed public housing, and some former residents had moved into the new units. Further, the agency had made major investments in its remaining traditional public housing developments, completing rehabilitation efforts that were part of the Plan for Transformation. Original residents who had elected to stay in public housing had moved into these refurbished developments.

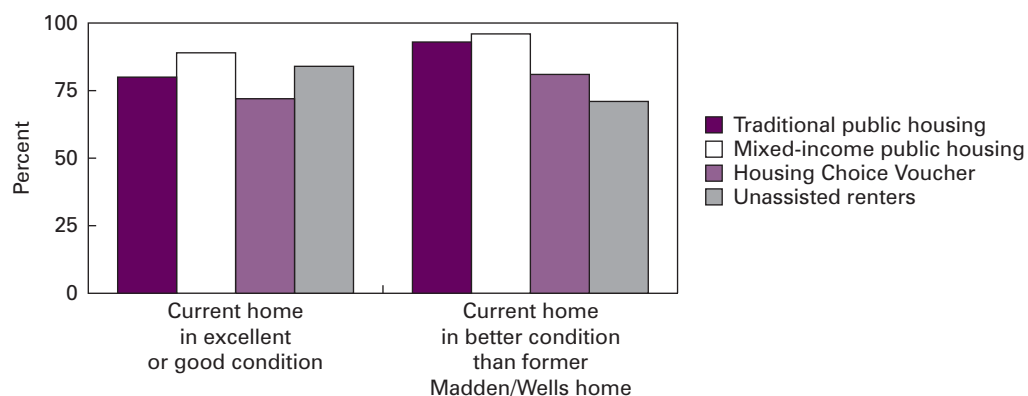
This brief reports on the longer-term housing quality outcomes for Madden/Wells residents, eight years after the baseline and 10 years into the CHA's Plan for Transformation. Overall, we find that housing quality has now improved substantially for CHA residents across the board. These differences are profound and represent a significant improvement in the quality of life for CHA's residents.

## Ratings of Current Housing

As described above, in 2005, respondents who had moved with vouchers reported improvements in housing quality, but residents who remained in Madden/Wells were enduring conditions that were as bad—or worse—than at the baseline in 2001. Four years later, the picture is quite different—the vast majority of residents report that their housing is in good condition, regardless of the type of assistance they receive. As figure 1 shows, most

*“Housing quality has improved substantially for CHA residents across the board.”*

FIGURE 1. Condition of Current Home by Housing Assistance in 2009



Source: 2009 Chicago Panel Study Sample

respondents now give high ratings to their housing and report that it is better than where they lived in Madden/Wells:

- Over three-fourths (77 percent) of respondents reported their current unit was in excellent or good condition. Respondents in mixed-income housing were most likely to rate their housing as excellent (43 percent), while approximately a quarter of those in traditional public housing, voucher units, and unassisted units gave their housing such a high rating. In sharp contrast to 2005, no residents living in traditional public housing rated their housing as poor, and less than 10 percent of residents in other types of housing gave their housing low ratings.<sup>1</sup>
- Nearly all survey respondents (84 percent) reported that their current unit was in better condition than their former Madden/Wells unit, including more than 90 percent of those in mixed-income or traditional public housing. These high ratings likely reflect the fact that these respondents were living in new or substantially refurbished units. As in 2005, more than 80 percent of respondents using vouchers to rent units in the private market also reported that their current unit was better than their housing in Madden/Wells.
- The few respondents (3 percent) who reported their current unit was in worse condition than their Madden/Wells

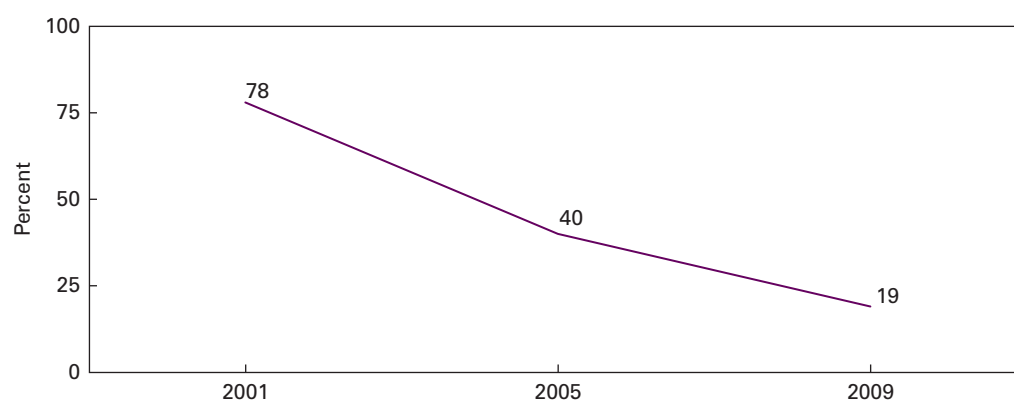
unit were all renting in the private market, either with a voucher or without assistance.

## Housing Problems

In addition to asking respondents to compare their current housing to their original public housing unit, we also asked them about a series of specific housing problems, similar to the list included in the American Housing Survey.<sup>2</sup> These problems include broken plumbing, mold, peeling paint, broken heating, and infestations of cockroaches and other vermin.

- Figure 2 shows the profound improvement in Madden/Wells' respondents housing quality since 2001. At baseline, nearly 80 percent of Madden/Wells residents reported two or more housing problems. But in 2009, just 19 percent reported two or more problems. Likewise, the proportion of respondents reporting severe housing quality problems (four or more problems) dropped from over 40 percent at baseline to less than 10 percent in 2009 (figure 3).
- Table 1 shows that the most common problems that respondents reported in 2009 were water leaks (17 percent) and peeling paint or broken plaster (11 percent). However, while not ideal, these levels still represent dramatic improvements from the baseline, when over half of Panel Study respondents reported each of these problems.

FIGURE 2. Respondents Reporting Two or More Housing Condition Problems

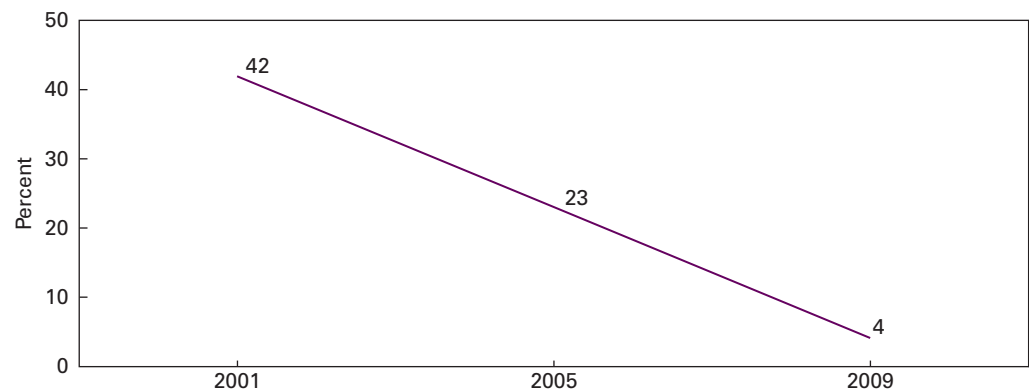


Sources: 2001, 2005, and 2009 Chicago Panel Study Sample

Note: All changes are significant at the  $p < .05$  level.



FIGURE 3. Respondents Reporting Four or More Housing Condition Problems



Sources: 2001, 2005, and 2009 Chicago Panel Study Sample

Note: All changes are significant at the  $p < .05$  level.

Figure 4 shows respondents' reports of current problems by type of housing assistance in 2009. Stunningly, those who relocated to a traditional public housing development report almost no problems with their units, a dramatic reversal of the trend from 2005. Residents who are renting in the private market (voucher holders and

unassisted renters) report the most problems overall, though the level is still substantially lower than when they lived in Madden/Wells. Even the most common problems are comparatively rare; in 2009, 23 percent of voucher holders reported water leaks, compared with 64 percent in 2001. Likewise, 17 percent reported

*“Those who relocated to a traditional public housing development report almost no problems with their housing.”*

TABLE 1. Problems in Housing Units

	Madden/Wells home, 2001 (%)	Current home, 2009 (%)	Change (percentage points)
Water leaks in home (in past three months)	58	17	-41**
Peeling paint or broken plaster larger than 8 by 11 inches	56	11	-44**
Exposed radiator without a cover	46	3	-43**
Significant mold or damage in bathroom	36	10	-27**
Cockroach infestation	34	9	-25**
Unit cold for 24 hours or more in winter	33	10	-23**
All toilets were not working (in past three months)	29	6	-23**
Rat or mice infestation	27	10	-17**

Sources: 2001 and 2009 Chicago Panel Study Samples.

Notes: Sample size is 136.

\*\* Indicates change is statistically significant at the  $p < .05$  percent level.

FIGURE 4. Respondents Reporting Two or More Housing Condition Problems by Housing Assistance in 2009



Sources: 2001, 2005, and 2009 Chicago Panel Study Sample

Note: All changes from 2001 to 2009 are significant at the  $p < .05$  level.

problems with peeling paint, compared with 64 percent at baseline. Private market renters' higher level of housing problems could reflect the fact that these residents are living in older buildings more likely to have problems or that they are renting from private landlords who fail to properly maintain their properties.

## Implications

After the four-year follow-up of 2005, we questioned whether CHA's Plan for Transformation would have a mixed legacy for residents, with former residents who had received vouchers or succeeded in moving into mixed-income housing far better off, and those left behind in traditional public housing still living in unacceptably poor conditions (Popkin 2010). In light of those earlier findings, the results from the 2009 eight-year follow-up are truly stunning: regardless of where they live, CHA relocatees are now living in significantly better housing. The CHA has put considerable time and effort into improving its remaining public housing developments, and the investment appears to have paid off—the small percentage of respondents who are still living in these developments report having high-quality housing, often better than their counterparts now renting in the

private market. Those in mixed-income housing and renting in the private market have also realized substantial gains and relatively few now report serious hazards in their units. Perhaps the most striking finding is that the gains of voucher holders that were documented in 2005 have not eroded over time, suggesting these improvements are long-lasting.

However, while these gains are extremely encouraging, the CHA needs to remain vigilant to ensure that conditions do not deteriorate again over time.

- The CHA must ensure that its traditional developments are well-managed and maintained so that they remain decent places for its families to live. The agency will need to sustain its current management oversight and lease-enforcement policies, as well as continue to provide adequate case management and supportive services for residents. The CHA has a long history of management neglect; demonstrating that it can maintain the quality of these newly rehabilitated developments will help the agency overcome this legacy.
- Likewise, the CHA must take care to ensure that its new mixed-income communities remain high-quality places to live. Although the numbers are low, the

fact that residents are already reporting such problems as water leaks, mold, and broken heat is a concern and suggests that the agency will need to carefully monitor the private management companies responsible for maintenance and upkeep.

- Finally, these findings suggest that while most voucher holders are living in decent private market housing, some continue to experience serious housing problems like mold, peeling paint and plaster, and water leaks. The CHA must continue to monitor and improve its HCV inspection system to ensure that all residents are living in units that meet HUD's housing quality standards. Further, the CHA should continue to offer voucher holders access to mobility counseling and supportive services to help residents make more informed housing choices.

## Notes

1. All reported differences in means and proportions are significant at the  $p < .10$  level.
2. For more information on the American Housing Survey, see U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (2009).

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## About the Authors



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## CHA Families and the Plan for Transformation

## Escaping the Hidden War *Safety Is the Biggest Gain for CHA Families*

Susan J. Popkin and David J. Price

*"The CHA's developments were among the most dangerous places in the nation."*

A main goal of the HOPE VI program was to improve public housing by replacing failed developments with healthy and safe communities that offer a better quality of life for residents. In 1999, when the Chicago Housing Authority's (CHA) Plan for Transformation began, the agency's large family developments were notorious for being among the most dangerous places in the nation. Decades of failed federal policies, managerial incompetence, financial malfeasance, and basic neglect had left these developments in an advanced state of decay, with overwhelming crime and violence and near-absolute gang dominance. During the 1990s, the CHA had fought an all-out war against the drug trafficking and violence in its developments, spending \$500 million on such efforts as law enforcement "sweeps" intended to remove drug dealers and gangs from its buildings, in-house police and security forces, and tenant patrols, none of which had any lasting effect on the crime and disorder (Popkin et al. 2000).

In 2001, before the HOPE VI redevelopment initiative began in Madden/Wells, respondents reported extreme problems

with crime and disorder. Over 80 percent reported "big problems" with drug sales and drug use in their development and more than 70 percent reported "big problems" with shootings and violence. Residents' perceptions were supported by official crime statistics; in 2001, reported violent crime in Madden/Wells was more than two times that for the rest of the city. The CHA's plans for Madden/Wells called for demolishing the development and replacing it with a new mixed-income development called Oakwood Shores.

By 2005, about 60 percent of Madden/Wells respondents had been relocated, most to the private market with vouchers. Respondents who had moved out reported dramatically improved circumstances—the proportion of voucher holders reporting big problems with drugs and violent crime fell by about 50 percentage points. However, the respondents still living in their original units in 2005 were living in conditions just as bad as in 2001. Indeed, circumstances were possibly worse; more than half of the development was empty and, according to respondents, gangs and drug dealers from recently closed



## A Good Place to Raise Children

Matthew and his granddaughter Amara were among the last families to move out of Madden/Wells. When we interviewed them in 2005, they were living with Amara's older sister and infant brother in a nearly vacant building. Matthew described his efforts to keep the drug dealers out of his building and to keep his grandchildren safe:

I keep them out of the building here. I don't have them around the building—at least, I talk to them and tell them, don't be doing drugs in this building. I got kids going to school, people going in and out. I got a senior citizen in this building, so I usually take care at this point. . . . You have to stand up to them . . . then you stand up to the ones that's controlling them, not the ones that's out there working for them. You know, you let them know how you feel about it, because if you don't, they'll run over you.

In 2005, Amara was 16 and, although doing well in school, was facing many challenges. Her mother was a drug addict and Amara described being a member of a crew, being involved in fights, and being arrested. Worst of all, Amara had witnessed her father being shot during a fight in Madden/Wells:

. . . When he got shot, I was close to him, that's why I think . . . that's what made him not want to come around me for a long time, because he thought like he almost had me killed, I guess, because I was just leaving him. . . . I was walking home from him. . . . The person came up out of nowhere, got to shooting him. Him being who he is, he running toward the person. . . . I ran behind the tree. I didn't know it was him. My momma grabbed me. Wouldn't nobody tell me what it was, but I'm crying because I'm scared, though. . . .

Matthew's first choice for relocation was Oakwood Shores, but he lost his job and the CHA relocated the family to another traditional public housing development. When we interviewed them in 2009, Matthew now had custody of three more of his grandchildren and Amara had a baby of her own. But the family was doing relatively well and both Matthew and Amara felt the new development was much better and a good place for raising children.

Matthew said,

Occasionally, people fight each other. Sometimes you hear a shot or two. But the last time I heard any shots around here was four, five months ago. You know, so . . . they don't do that quite often out here. And then, usually, when you hear people shooting, they're usually shot up in the air, not at the individual.

Amara agreed that the new development was much safer:

Even in the little violence that has happened over here, it hasn't been much, and I can honestly say if they have been shooting over here, I've been in my house and I ain't heard it.

developments, such as Robert Taylor Homes and Stateway Gardens, were moving into Madden/Wells in search of new territory. Finally, the remaining residents were disproportionately those who faced multiple challenges, such as substance abuse, mental illness, and criminal records (Popkin et al. 2008).

Because of the crime and rapidly deteriorating physical conditions—

one building had to be closed on an emergency basis when the heat stopped working—the CHA accelerated the schedule for closing the development and relocated the last residents in August 2008. In 2009, all of the Madden/Wells Panel Study respondents were living in new housing, either in Oakwood Shores, in the private market, or in a rehabbed CHA development. This brief explores

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*“Improved safety and quality of life has been the greatest benefit for CHA residents.”*

whether the safety gains for early relocatees have been sustained and whether those who moved later have benefited equally—because these residents tended to be among the most vulnerable, there was good reason to think that they would not fare as well. We find that almost all former residents are now living in safer conditions and that improved safety and quality of life has been the greatest benefit of the Plan for Transformation for CHA residents.

## Residents Feel Safe in Their New Communities

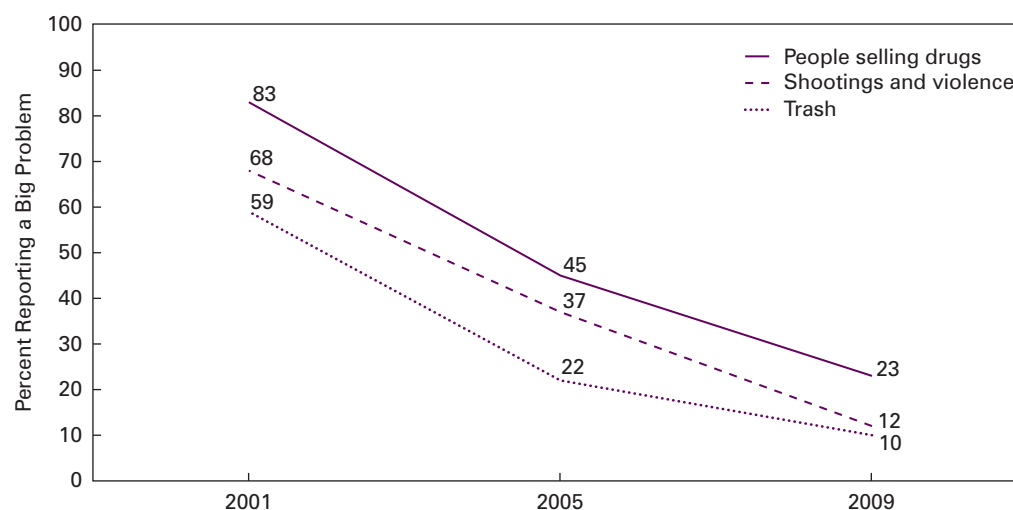
The results of the 2009 Panel Study follow-up show that nearly all respondents are now living in communities that they view as substantially safer than Madden/Wells.

- Figure 1 illustrates how much the situation for Madden/Wells respondents has improved since 2001. Respondents' perceptions of violence and disorder in their neighborhoods have decreased significantly across the board. In 2001, more than 70 percent of the respondents rated each of four indicators of social disorder (drug use, drug trafficking, loitering, and gangs) a big problem; in 2009, fewer than 25 percent viewed

these issues as a major problem in their community.<sup>1</sup> Likewise, the proportion of respondents who rated three indicators of violence (shootings and violence, attacks, and sexual assault) as a big problem decreased by more than half. Finally, complaints of big problems with physical disorder (trash and graffiti) in 2009 were 40 percentage points lower than they were in 2001.

- Further, in a major shift from 2005, there are no longer any significant differences in perceived safety among respondents in different types of housing. Those who relocated to traditional public housing are just as well off as those renting with vouchers or living in mixed-income developments. This finding reflects the significant investment the CHA has made in its traditional public housing developments as part of the Plan for Transformation.
- Another indicator of improved neighborhood conditions is that respondents now rate their current communities much higher than they rated Madden/Wells on collective efficacy (table 1). Collective efficacy is a summary measure for neighborhood health (defined as social cohesion and trust) and is correlated with crime rates and other neighborhood indicators, such as low

FIGURE 1. *Perceptions of Neighborhood Social Disorder and Violence*



Source: 2009 Chicago Panel Study Sample.

Note: All changes are significant at the  $p < .05$  level.

## I Feel Safer Now

Michelle has three children—a daughter, Tonya, who is about to leave for college, and two adult children. When we interviewed Michelle in 2001, she talked about the dangers in her community, speaking of other children who had been shot and her fears that her own children could be caught in the cross-fire.

I had a girlfriend lost her daughter in a drive-by shooting and she wasn't 12 or 13 years old.

Q: When was this?

A: About three or four years ago. Like my neighbor friend around here, her son got shot. It hurts these kids to know somebody that is killed by gang-related. That's why late at night, I have her (my daughter) with me. . . .

Tonya also said she felt unsafe in her community:

Q: Are there times that you don't feel safe in the neighborhood?

A: Yeah . . . When they start shootin' and then when all of them start yelling, turn around, I'm going to get my family and stuff.

When we interviewed them again in 2009, Michelle and Tonya were living in Oakwood Shores. Michelle said she no longer had to worry:

I don't have the fear, you know, everybody shoots on the streets everywhere, but over there on King Drive [in Madden/Wells], it was like just sitting on the porch fearing, going to the park fearing, just couldn't walk to the store but they done had a shootout early that morning, so now you can't go nowhere because you scared to go outside. They might start shooting around the time you go out putting garbage cans in the streets and all that. Over with. It's love, love right here. I love this crib. Been here three years. It's all good.

Tonya was a little more equivocal than her mother, citing problems in a nearby park. But she said that she generally feels much safer than in Madden/Wells and that her mother gives her much more freedom.

■ I feel safer now . . . because of the simple fact you have to think about it. In Wells, you didn't have the [utility] bills, you didn't have the locked doors, you had none of that. And no security walking around—it's just you out there. . . . But over here, you've got so much. You've got the police, then you have your neighbors. Your neighbors look like, "Oh, I think she need help," and then they're calling the police. So it's a lot.

birth weight, infant mortality, and asthma (Sampson, Raudenbush, and Earls 1997). In 2001, Madden/Wells HOPE VI Panel Study respondents rated their neighborhood lower on collective efficacy than Chicago-area residents in a citywide survey.<sup>2</sup> But by 2009, the situation was reversed, with Panel Study respondents rating their communities higher than the Chicago-area average on both social cohesion and social control.

## Residents Live in Lower Crime, but Still Troubled Areas

To put respondents' perceptions in context, we examined the change in official crime

rates from Madden/Wells in 2001 to the varied Chicago neighborhoods where respondents live in 2009. This analysis supports respondents' reports—they are now living in communities where the crime rate is half that reported in Madden/Wells in 2001.

■ In 2001, the Madden/Wells community reported 43 violent crimes per 1,000 residents.<sup>3</sup> By 2009, the median respondent lived in a neighborhood with a much lower rate of 23 violent crimes per 1,000 residents (figure 2). However, while this represents a significant improvement, this figure is still well above the Chicago-area rate of 14 violent crimes per 1,000 residents.

- Another indicator that Madden/Wells respondents are now living in less dangerous communities is that respondents were significantly less likely to report being the victim of a crime in 2009 than in 2001. In 2001, 5 percent of the respondents reported that a member of their household had been caught in a shootout in the previous six months; in 2009, this figure was down to 1 percent. Likewise, in 2001, 4 percent of the respondents reported a bullet coming into their home, but none reported such an incident in 2009. Finally, 5 percent reported having their homes broken into over six months, down from 12 percent at the baseline.
- Findings from the in-depth interviews with adults and children also reflect the fact that Madden/Wells respondents now live in much safer neighborhoods. However, these interviews also highlight the fact that although these communities are better than Madden/Wells, they are still often troubled. Even if the drug dealing or gang activity is not as pervasive or threatening as it was in Madden/Wells, it is still a very real presence. In a few instances, youth

seemed to view the neighborhood as more troubled than their parents did, perhaps because they were more likely to encounter problems with other teens or because their parents, who had more vivid memories of the extreme conditions in Madden/Wells, were more likely to make favorable comparisons.

## Implications

These findings highlight a very real and important impact of the CHA's Plan for Transformation—CHA residents no longer live in virtual war zones. That the overwhelming majority of Madden/Wells respondents no longer have to live in fear is a dramatic and important improvement in their quality of life. Given the mixed picture found in 2005 (Popkin 2010), the fact that this effect holds even for those living in rehabilitated CHA developments is an unexpected and truly impressive change, one that might have longer-term implications for residents' overall well-being. Indeed, as we have documented elsewhere (Price and Popkin 2010), our results also show a significant reduction in anxiety attacks, which is likely a reflection of improved circumstances. The CHA's next

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*"CHA residents no longer live in virtual war zones."*

TABLE 1. *Social Cohesion and Social Control*

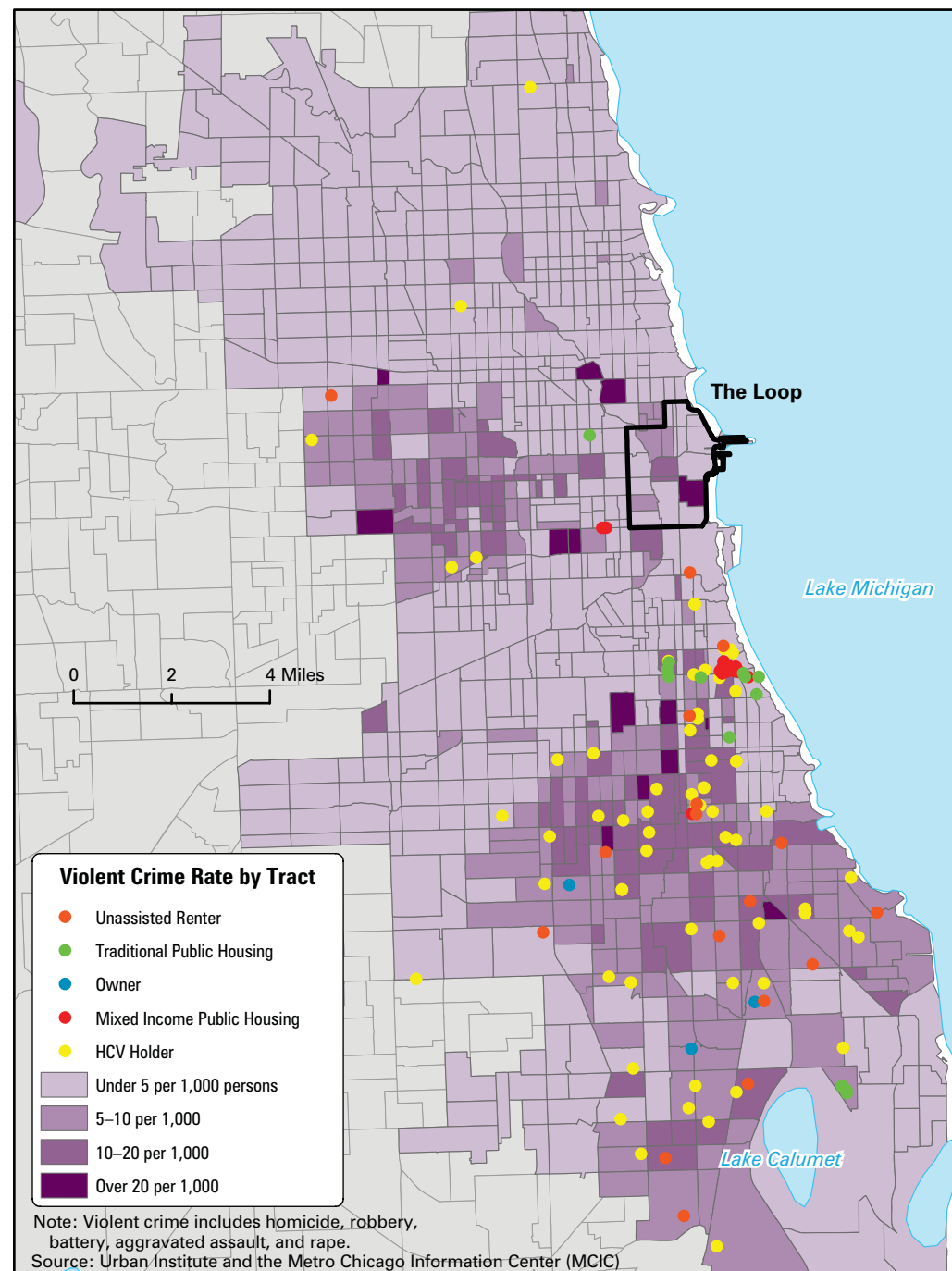
	2001	2005	2009	Chicago
Social Cohesion (percent who agree)				
Neighbors willing to help	65	69	81**	74
Neighbors share values	40	53**	62**	48
Close-knit neighborhood	49	60**	58	55
Neighbors can be trusted	30	40*	42**	60
Neighbors get along with each other	52	70**	73**	72
Social Control (percent who think neighbors likely to do something if they saw)				
Kids skipping school	55	57	65*	57
Kids defacing a building	59	69*	84**	74
Kids disrespecting an adult	61	65	69	53
A fight in front of their home	56	68**	76**	62

Sources: 2009 Chicago Panel Study Sample and Project on Human Development in Chicago Neighborhoods, 1994–1995 Community Survey.

\* indicates change from baseline is significant at the  $p < .10$  level.

\*\* indicates change from baseline is significant at the  $p < .05$  level.

FIGURE 2. HOPE VI Relocates and Violent Crime, 2008



challenge will be to sustain and improve upon these gains:

- The CHA must recognize that these gains, however impressive, are fragile. To sustain these improvements, the CHA must remain vigilant about monitoring the private companies that now manage its mixed-income and traditional public housing developments.

Further, the CHA must continue to work with the Chicago Police Department to ensure that its properties remain safe and decent places for its residents to live. Finally, the housing authority should continue funding its comprehensive resident service programs to ensure that troubled residents receive the support they need to reduce the chance they could create serious problems that

threaten overall conditions in their developments and put them at risk of losing their housing.

- Further, while conditions for voucher holders have improved substantially as a result of relocation, the reality is that they continue to live in moderately poor, moderately high crime, racially segregated neighborhoods that offer few real opportunities for themselves and their children. The CHA needs to continue to explore strategies to encourage families to move to low-poverty opportunity areas, and to reduce the barriers that prevent assisted households from accessing such communities.

## Notes

1. All reported differences in means and proportions are significant at the  $p < .10$  level.
2. Chicago-area averages are based on data from the Project on Human Development in Chicago Neighborhoods, 1994–1995 Community Survey.
3. Rates of violent crimes are based on data collected and tabulated by the Metro Chicago Information Center.

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## About the Authors



**Susan J. Popkin** is director of the Urban Institute's Program on Neighborhoods and Youth Development and a senior fellow in the Metropolitan Housing and Communities Policy Center.



**David J. Price** is a research assistant in the Urban Institute's Metropolitan Housing and Communities Policy Center.



## **The Chicago Panel Study**

The Chicago Panel Study is a follow-up to the five-site HOPE VI Panel Study, which tracked resident outcomes from 2001 to 2005. The Chicago Panel Study continues to track the residents from the Chicago Housing Authority's Ida B. Wells Homes/Wells Extension and Madden Park Homes who were part of the original HOPE VI Panel sample. In October 2009, the CHA marked the 10th anniversary of the Plan for Transformation; the purpose of the Chicago Panel Study is to track the circumstances of the families in the Chicago HOPE VI Panel Study sample to assess how they are faring as the Plan for Transformation progresses.

Revitalization activities began in Madden/Wells in mid- to late 2001, and the last residents were relocated in August 2008. At the baseline in summer 2001, we surveyed a random sample of 198 heads of household and conducted in-depth, qualitative interviews with seven adults and seven children. We conducted follow-up surveys and interviews for the HOPE VI Panel Study in 2003 (n = 174, response rate 88 percent) and 2005 (n = 165, response rate 83 percent). In 2009, when we attempted to track the original Madden/Wells sample for the Chicago Panel Study, we surveyed 136 heads of household (response rate 69 percent) and conducted in-depth interviews with 9 adults and 9 children. The largest source of attrition between 2001 and 2009 was mortality; we were able to locate, if not survey, nearly all original sample members in the 2009 follow-up.

The principal investigator for the Chicago Panel Study is Susan J. Popkin, Ph.D., director of the Urban Institute's Program on Neighborhoods and Youth Development. Funding for this research was provided by the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation. Finally, we wish to thank the CHA, the many colleagues who have assisted with and commented on this research, and most of all, the Chicago Panel Study respondents, who have so generously shared their stories with us for so many years.

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## CHA Families and the Plan for Transformation

## CHA Transformation *Children and Youth*

Megan Gallagher

The distressed public housing developments of the Chicago Housing Authority (CHA) were home to tens of thousands of children, many of whom suffered terrible consequences from the deplorable conditions—plagued by asthma after living in cockroach-infested buildings or injured by lead paint, unprotected radiators, darkened stairwells, and other hazards. Still more were victims of the overwhelming social disorganization, neglected or abused by drug-addicted parents, traumatized by witnessing violence, killed or injured in gang wars, or arrested and incarcerated for their own involvement in the disorder (Popkin et al. 2000).

Because children are particularly vulnerable, child outcomes have been a special focus for the HOPE VI Panel Study since the baseline study in 2001. On one hand, children are the most likely to benefit in important ways from improved housing quality—and reduced exposure to such risks as lead paint or mold—and from safer, less distressed neighborhoods. On the other hand, moving can disrupt their education and friendships and even put older youth at risk for conflict with local gangs. The HOPE VI Panel Study survey

included questions about children's behavior, which is an indicator of children's mental health. In 2005, we found that across the five sites, children whose families received vouchers were faring better after relocation than those still living in traditional public housing developments (Gallagher and Bajaj 2007). However, those still living in their original development in 2005 were experiencing the most problems, with parents—especially those of girls—reporting high levels of behavior problems and delinquency. These findings suggested that girls, in particular, were suffering from the ill effects of being left behind in a development that was becoming increasingly dangerous and chaotic as vacancies increased (Popkin 2010).

By the 2009 follow-up, Madden/Wells had been closed for more than a year and all the residents had been relocated. This brief examines how relocation has affected the well-being of the youngest former Madden/Wells residents. As in our earlier work, we rely on parental reports from the survey, because we did not survey children. However, we did conduct in-person interviews with nine young people from

the survey sample. In general, we find that these youth are doing relatively well; however, there are some reasons for concern, especially for boys.

### Youth Live in Safer, Lower-Poverty Communities

In 2001, we interviewed the parents of 95 children age 6 to 14 years old in Madden/Wells. In 2009, we collected data on 56 of them. Some of these children are still school-age and others are young adults; their ages range from 14 to 22 years old.<sup>1</sup> Most live in households where their parents have received vouchers (63 percent). Another 10 percent live in traditional public housing, 13 percent in mixed-income housing, and 13 percent in households that are no longer receiving assistance.

- Over a quarter of the youth (27 percent) lived in households that remained in Madden/Wells almost until it closed, moving for the first time between 2005 and 2009. In 2009, we find that Madden/Wells families have generally moved to better quality housing in neighborhoods that are considerably safer and lower in poverty than their original public housing community (Popkin and Price 2010). Over two-thirds of parents (69 percent) report that their current neighborhoods are better than the Madden/Wells neighborhood for themselves and their children.
- Neighborhood-level data suggest that youth have moved to lower-poverty neighborhoods with lower violent crime rates (Buron and Popkin 2010). The median neighborhood poverty rate for youth was 65 percent in 2001, versus 33 percent in 2009. The median violent crime rate was 43 per 1,000 people in 2001, versus 27 per 1,000 people in 2009.<sup>2</sup> Families with children are no more likely to relocate to lower-poverty or lower-crime neighborhoods than families without children.

In in-depth interviews, some youth report that their neighborhoods are “qui-

eter” with less gun violence and drug trafficking. Anthony, a 15-year-old boy whose family is renting a home with a voucher on the far South Side said that he feels safe “because it’s more quiet and you barely hear shooting or anything.”

Other young people are more skeptical about their safety. Several young people whom we spoke with discussed the shooting, fighting, and gang activity in their neighborhoods. Terell, a 19-year-old whose family rents a home in a South Side neighborhood with a voucher, thinks that his current neighborhood is safer than Madden/Wells but that many of his neighbors are involved in illegal behavior: “So now I just see majority of every, every black male either gang banging, drinking, or smoking weed. That, that’s what I see. Not everyone, but majority and especially living around in this [South Side neighborhood] . . . ”

Our in-depth interviews also suggest that some youth struggle with the stress of relocation. Like Amara, a 20-year-old now living in another small public housing development, they say they have had to make trade-offs: the comfort and familiarity of the Madden/Wells development for the improved safety of their new neighborhoods. Amara reminisced: “I loved the Wells. If it was still there, I’d love to be in there right now. Honestly. I mean, it was, it was fun. It . . . was an interesting time growing up because it was, I, it was where I was from and I know everybody.”

Although most of the young people we spoke with reported that they made friends easily in their new neighborhood, a few said they had difficulty adapting to new neighborhoods and social networks. For example, Lionel, a 17-year-old whose family was living in the same South Side neighborhood, said that in his new neighborhood, he had no real friends, “just associates.”

### Older Youth Seem to Be Getting Wiser

As in the previous rounds of the HOPE VI Panel Study, in 2009 we examined several domains of child well-being.<sup>3</sup> In contrast to

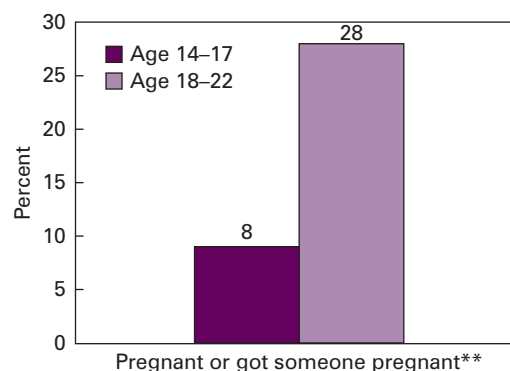
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*“Young people have had to make trade-offs: the familiarity of Madden/Wells for improved safety.”*

the last round in 2005, when we found that youth—especially girls—whose families had relocated with vouchers were faring better than those still living in Madden/Wells (Gallagher and Bajaj 2007), in 2009, we find no consistent patterns of change over time or differences in outcomes for youth with different types of housing assistance. However, while the numbers are small, some patterns suggest that older youth may be aging out of many of the problem behaviors they exhibited when they were younger (figure 1).

- Young adults (18 and older) made up over a third of our sample in 2009, allowing us to explore the youths' transitions to adulthood. According to parental reports, these young adults are significantly less likely than younger sample members to exhibit two or more negative behaviors in the past three months<sup>4</sup> (20 percent versus 44 percent) or two or more delinquent behaviors in the past years,<sup>5</sup> such as going to juvenile court, getting into trouble with police, or being in a gang (0 percent versus 12 percent). For example, young adults are less likely to be arrested than school-age youth (0 percent versus 12 percent).
- Youth appear to be better off in some ways, but our data also indicate a reason for concern: 9 percent of school-age youth and 28 percent of young adults

FIGURE 2. Youth and Pregnancy



Source: 2009 Chicago Panel Study Sample

\*\* indicates difference between subgroups is significant at the  $p < .05$  level.

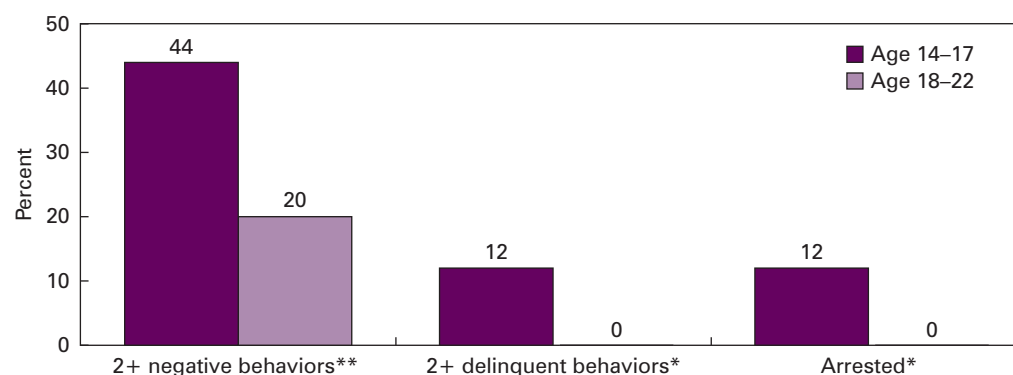
have gotten pregnant or gotten someone else pregnant (figure 2). Becoming a parent at such a young age can make it more difficult to have stable relationships (National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unwanted Pregnancy 2008) and can have serious consequences for the physical and mental health and cognitive and emotional well-being of their children (Logan et al. 2007).

### Girls Are on a More Positive Path

Our findings also highlight another change since 2005: in 2005, parents of girls in Madden/Wells reported surprisingly high rates of negative and delinquent behavior, while the figures for boys remained relatively stable compared to the 2001 base-

*“Young adults are aging out of behavior problems, but many are becoming parents too early.”*

FIGURE 1. Youth with Behavior Problems



Source: 2009 Chicago Panel Study Sample

\* indicates difference between subgroups is significant at the  $p < .10$  level.

\*\* indicates difference between subgroups is significant at the  $p < .05$  level.

line. In 2009, these trends have reverted to what we found in 2001 and 2003 (Popkin, Eiseman, and Cove 2004; Popkin et al. 2002); young women appear to be faring substantially better than young men, particularly in terms of behavior and education (table A).

- In 2009, boys were significantly more likely than girls to have two or more delinquent behaviors (10 percent versus 0 percent). Boys were also more likely than girls to be suspended, excluded, or expelled (34 percent versus 4 percent); go to juvenile court (11 percent versus 0 percent); and be arrested (15 percent versus 0 percent). All of the sampled youth who were arrested are boys (figure 3).

In our in-depth interviews, it was clear that many of the young men had placed their hopes in sports as a way out of poverty. But our findings suggest that while participation in basketball, baseball,

and football may have benefits—keeping them occupied outside school, building their self-esteem, and providing them with male role models—it may not keep them off the streets. In fact, the survey data suggest that their school attendance, school engagement, and delinquent behaviors are compromising their potential. These findings are consistent with previous research on the well-being of young males in high-poverty neighborhoods (Popkin, Leventhal, and Weissman 2010; Leventhal, Dupere, and Brooks-Gunn 2009).

In contrast to the young men in our sample, the young women appear to be applying themselves in school and at home.

- Girls are significantly more likely to be highly engaged in school<sup>6</sup> than boys (52 percent versus 19 percent) (figure 4). To put it more starkly, three-quarters of the youth whose parents say they are highly engaged in school are girls.

*“Young women are applying themselves in school and taking responsibility at home while young men are preoccupied with sports.”*

TABLE A. Youth Outcomes by Gender and Age Group, 2009 (percent)

	All (n = 57)	Girls (n = 25)	Boys (n = 24)	Age 14–17 (n = 41)	Age 18–22 (n = 16)
Excellent or very good health	65	66	60	72	53
School involvement					
High level of engagement	35	52	19**	31	44
Low level of engagement	31	20	38	36	19
Absenteeism					
5+ days per year	18	4	28*	20	14
10+ days per year	8	0	10*	12	0
Age is appropriate for grade	67	73	65	62	76
Repeated a grade	29	23	29	33	23
Behavior					
Exhibits 5+ positive behaviors	53	53	56	46	65
Exhibits 2+ negative behaviors	35	27	36	44	20**
Exhibits 2+ delinquent behaviors	7	0	10*	12	0*
Suspended, expelled, or excluded	23	4	34***	26	15
Been arrested	8	0	15**	12	0*
Went to juvenile court	4	0	11*	7	0
Pregnant or got someone pregnant	16	17	9	8	28**
Employed	20	26	17	15	30

Source: 2009 Chicago Panel Study Sample.

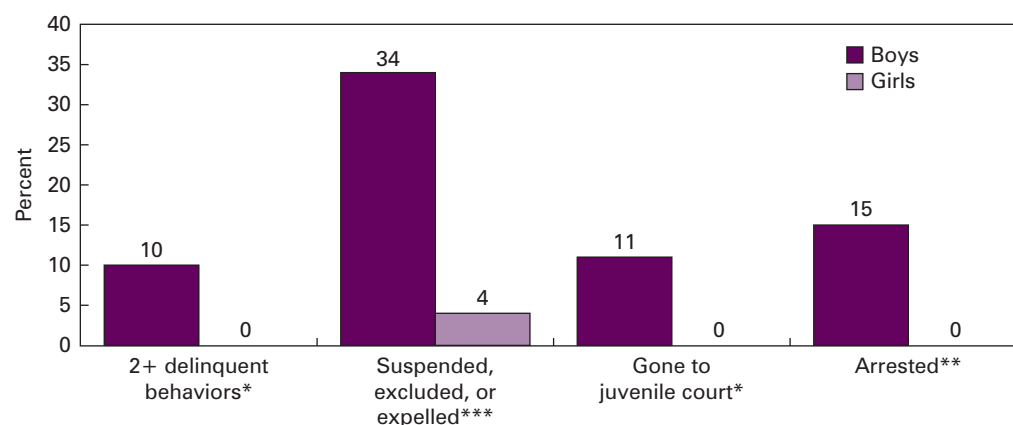
Notes: Sample sizes shown are the lowest weighted sample sizes among the variables presented in the table.

\* indicates difference between gender or age subgroups is significant at the  $p < .10$  level.

\*\* indicates difference between gender or age subgroups is significant at the  $p < .05$  level.

\*\*\* indicates difference between gender or age subgroups is significant at the  $p < .01$  level.

FIGURE 3. Delinquent Behaviors in Boys and Girls



Source: 2009 Chicago Panel Study Sample

\* indicates difference between boys and girls is significant at the  $p < .10$  level.

\*\* indicates difference between boys and girls is significant at the  $p < .05$  level.

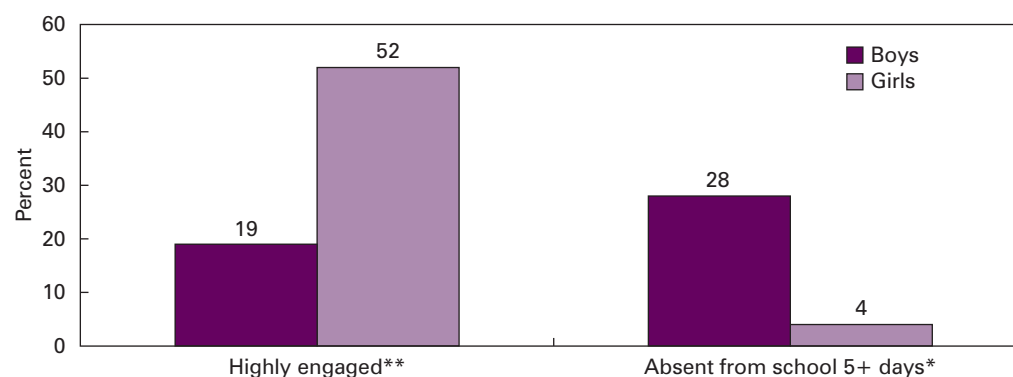
\*\*\* indicates difference between boys and girls is significant at the  $p < .01$  level.

- Boys miss school more than girls. Over a quarter of boys miss five or more days versus 4 percent of girls. Ten percent of all boys miss 10 or more days of school; all of the students missing 10 or more days are boys.

Not only are young women present and engaged in school, but they are also taking on additional responsibilities at home, and some are even going to college. Tonya, an 18-year-old girl whose family is now living in mixed-income housing not far from the former development, describes how leaving Madden/Wells changed her attitude and lifestyle for the better:

I took life more serious. That's what I can say. Because at first it was like when you was in the Wells, whatever happens. And now I am thinking for tomorrow. And now I'm thinking about, oh, I wonder what I'm going to do next week or I wonder can I do this. So it's like I got more opportunities. I thought outside the box. 'Cause when you was in Wells most people didn't know much. You didn't have the things that you have now. So, me getting older, more mature, I have bills, I have responsibilities, I can't sit here and horseplay. Oh,

FIGURE 4. School Engagement and Absences of Girls and Boys



Source: 2009 Chicago Panel Study Sample

\* indicates difference between boys and girls is significant at the  $p < .10$  level.

\*\* indicates difference between boys and girls is significant at the  $p < .05$  level.



[I'm fixing to buy] these shoes. I have to budget now. So it's like you grow, you grow up, you meet new people, see new things. It's just real it's different now. It's a good thing.

## Implications

CHA's transformation of its distressed developments has the potential to profoundly affect the life chances for children. Instead of growing up in physically deteriorating, extremely violent communities, they are now living in decent housing in neighborhoods that are lower poverty and lower crime than where their families were living a decade ago. On the other hand, moving is hard on children, particularly for young people already struggling behaviorally or academically, and children have suffered serious consequences as a result of the transformation—having to endure worsening conditions as developments were gradually emptied. Our findings in 2009 paint a mixed picture—some youth seem to be on a positive trajectory, but others are struggling, already parenting or engaged in delinquent or destructive behavior. As other research has found, young men seem to be particularly vulnerable, and too many are alienated and disengaged (see Popkin, Leventhal, and Weissman 2010; Briggs, Popkin, and Goering 2010; Leventhal et. al 2009).

Although CHA's Transformation was likely to have major impacts on youth, the agency's relocation and supportive services have focused primarily on working with heads of household to help them make housing choices and connect to the labor force (Popkin 2010). To date, only a few comprehensive programs, such as the Chicago Family Case Management Program and Project Match, have systematically targeted youth (Theodos et al. 2010). Going forward, CHA must increase its focus on youth, both to help promote positive outcomes for its residents and ensure the sustainability of its mixed-income and newly rehabilitated public housing. If more youth are engaged and on positive trajec-

ries, it will be easier for the housing authority to ensure its developments are safe and manageable.

- The CHA should ensure that its supportive services and relocation programs include a focus on youth. In particular, services should provide assistance to help children and youth transition to new neighborhoods and schools. In addition to providing support, partnering with community programs that provide youth with after-school and summer activities could reduce social isolation and dependence on past social networks. Job training and tutoring could improve their prospects for success once they graduate.
- Young people can also help design the resources for revitalized communities. Innovative programs like Youth-Plan, Learn, Act, Now! (Y-PLAN) in California engage youth in the neighborhood revitalization process by providing opportunities to collect information, air their opinions, and discuss problems and solutions with local leaders (McKoy, Bierbaum, and Vincent 2009).

## Notes

1. Of the 39 children from 2001 who were not interviewed in 2009, 15 had parents who did not respond to the 2009 survey, 2 had lost their parents (died), and 21 no longer lived with their parents. Why the remaining child was not included in the survey sample is not clear. Of the children who don't live with their parents, 18 of them are 18 years or older; 2 are age 17, and 1 is 16. Young people who are not in the 2009 sample may have different outcomes than young people who are.
2. We ran correlations between neighborhood characteristics and child well-being outcomes: no clear relationships exist. We also ran correlations between time in the current neighborhood and child well-being outcomes: no clear relationships exist.
3. We examine health status, school involvement, behavior, and employment. Health and employment findings are presented in table A but are not discussed in this brief. Likewise, our positive behaviors measure, which was derived from the 10-item Positive Behavior Scale from the Child Development Supplement in the Panel Study of Income Dynamics, is shown in table A but is not discussed.

4. All reported differences in means and proportions are significant at the  $p < .10$  level. Items for the negative behaviors scale were taken from the Behavior Problems Index. The heads of households were asked to indicate how often the children exhibited any one of the seven specific negative behaviors: trouble getting along with teachers; being disobedient at school; being disobedient at home; spending time with kids who get in trouble; bullying or being cruel or mean; feeling restless or overly active; and being unhappy, sad, or depressed. The answers ranged from "often," and "sometimes true" to "not true." We measure the proportion of children whose parents reported that they demonstrated two or more of these behaviors often or sometimes over the previous three months.
5. Respondents were asked if over the previous year their children had been involved in any of the following nine activities: being suspended or expelled from school, going to a juvenile court, having a problem with alcohol or drugs, getting into trouble with the police, doing something illegal for money, getting pregnant or getting someone else pregnant, being in a gang, being arrested, and being in jail or incarcerated. We measure the proportion of children involved in two or more of these behaviors.
6. Developed in 1996 by Jim Connell and Lisa J. Bridges at the Institute for Research and Reform in Education in California, this measure attempts to assess the level of child's interest and willingness to do their schoolwork. Each head of household was asked four questions about whether the child: cares about doing well in school, only works on homework when forced to, does just enough homework to get by, or always does his or her homework. The answers were scored on a scale, from 1 to 4, where a value of 1 means "none of the time" and a value of 4 means "all of the time" (answers to the negative items were scored in reverse). The response scores were summed up, creating a 16-point scale. We measure the proportion of children with a high level of school engagement, which is equivalent to a scale score of 15 or more.

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## About the Author



**Megan Gallagher** is a research associate in the Urban Institute's Metropolitan Housing and Communities Policy Center.

## **The Chicago Panel Study**

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## CHA Families and the Plan for Transformation

# The Health Crisis for CHA Families

David J. Price and Susan J. Popkin

The HOPE VI Panel Study research has highlighted that many residents of distressed public housing face severe health challenges. In 2007, we argued that this problem was so serious that it should receive the same policy focus as unemployment (Manjarrez, Popkin, and Guernsey 2007; Popkin, Levy, and Buron 2009).

Because of the well-documented link between physical environment and well-being (see Lindberg et al. forthcoming), the HOPE VI Panel Study included a focus on resident health. At the baseline in 2001, HOPE VI Panel Study respondents from Chicago and the other four study sites were in far worse health than other low-income households, reporting high rates of overall poor health, as well as of asthma and depression (Popkin et al. 2002). The 2003 and 2005 follow-ups showed this problem intensifying over time: in 2005, two out of every five respondents (41 percent) in Madden/Wells and the other four sites rated their health as either “fair” or “poor.” Further, at every age level, respondents were much more likely to describe their health as fair or poor than other adults overall and even than black women, a group with higher-than-average rates of poor health. Not only did respon-

dents report high rates of disease, they were also clearly debilitated by their illnesses: one in four respondents reported having such difficulty with physical mobility that they could not walk three city blocks, climb 10 steps without resting, or stand on their feet for two hours (Manjarrez et al. 2007; Popkin 2010).

The 2009 follow-up of the Chicago Housing Authority (CHA) Panel Study shows that respondents’ well-being has improved in important ways—they now live in housing that is substantially higher-quality and in neighborhoods that are dramatically safer than the Madden/Wells development (Buron and Popkin 2010; Popkin and Price 2010). However, in this brief, we present findings that show that despite these improvements, respondents’ health has continued to deteriorate rapidly; reported health problems in 2009 are stunning, and the mortality rate is shockingly high. In our report on the 2005 follow-up (Manjarrez et al. 2007), we stated that the health situation was “so severe that it calls for urgent attention and new approaches to providing services to this extremely vulnerable population.” Four years later, the urgency has only increased. The need

for strong and effective action is now even more critical.

## Overall Health: Deteriorating over Time

At each wave of the Panel Study, we asked respondents to rate their health on a five-point scale from “excellent” to “poor.” Overall health ratings are important because they are predictive of morbidity (i.e., serious illness) and mortality (Bosworth et al. 1999; Franks, Gold, and Fiscella 2003). As figure 1 shows, despite improvements in respondents’ well-being as a result of moving to safer neighborhoods with better housing (Burton and Popkin 2010), their overall health has continued to deteriorate, indicating that they are at high risk for serious health problems.

- In 2009, Madden/Wells respondents rated their overall health significantly worse than the already-poor ratings in previous years. In 2009, more than half (51 percent) of respondents identified their health as fair or poor, up from 37 percent in 2001.<sup>1</sup> By comparison, just 13 percent of the general population reported fair or poor health; the figure for black women (who tend to be less

healthy than average) is 20 percent.<sup>2</sup> After controlling for such factors as age and gender, a multivariate analysis showed that those who had lived in public housing for at least 10 years in 2001 were most likely to report negative changes in health by 2009.<sup>3</sup> These long-term public housing residents may have already had marginal health in 2001, either because the conditions in public housing caused their poor health or because unhealthy residents were less likely to leave.

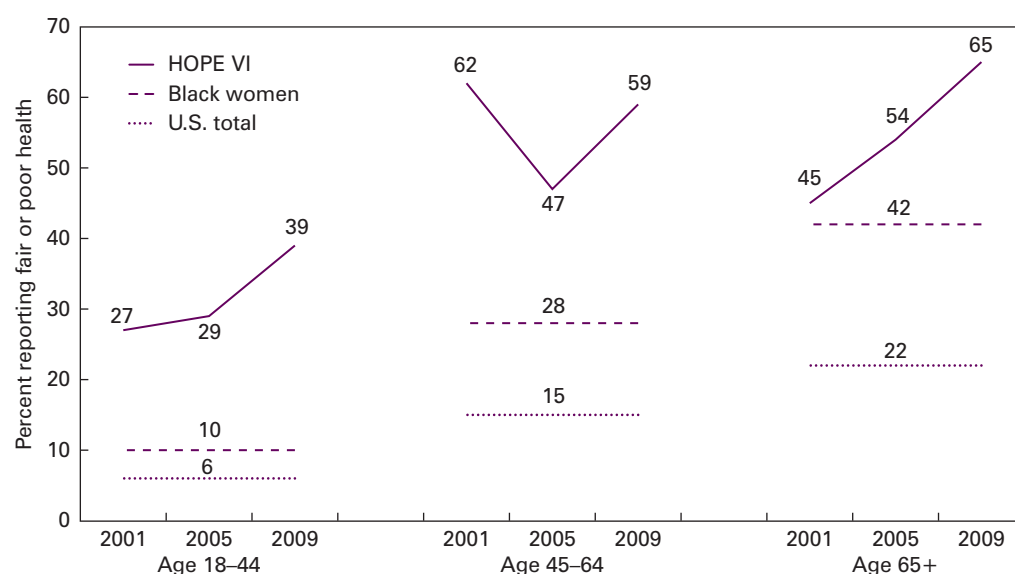
- Figure 1 shows that these stark differences hold even when we account for age. In 2001, Madden/Wells respondents’ health was worse than the general population’s, and has been steadily deteriorating since. In fact, respondents age 18 to 44 now rate their health as fair or poor more than six times as often as the national average for their own age group, and almost twice as often as the national average for people over 65.

## Chronic Illness and Disability

Madden/Wells respondents’ overall health ratings indicate high risk for serious medical conditions. In 2009, as in the previous follow-ups, we asked respondents whether they had been diagnosed with a range of

*“Respondents 18 to 44 rate their health as fair or poor more than six times as often as the national average for their age group, and almost twice as often as people over 65.”*

FIGURE 1. Self-Reported Health Status of HOPE VI Respondents



Sources: 2001, 2005, and 2009 Chicago Panel Study Sample and 2005 National Health Interview Survey.



specific ailments. Again, residents' reports indicate a population in distress, with extraordinarily high rates of chronic, debilitating illness. The only positive change since 2005 is a reduction in anxiety and worry, which may reflect respondents' improved living circumstances.

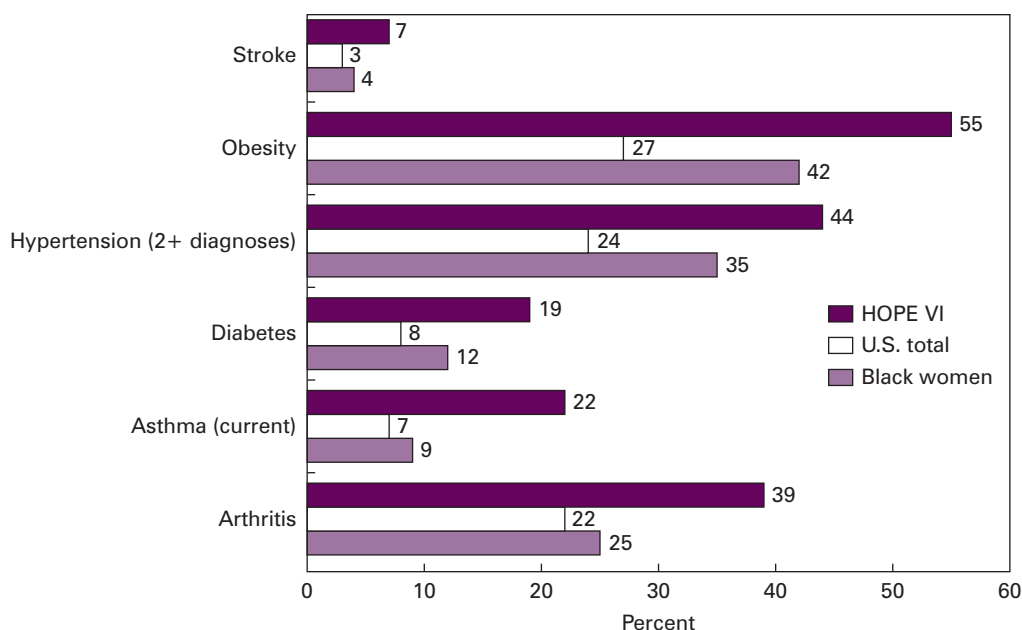
- More than half (54 percent) of respondent reported having an illness requiring regular, ongoing care in 2009, up significantly from 44 percent in 2005 and 37 percent in 2001.
- In 2009, more than half (51 percent) of Madden/Wells respondents reported having been diagnosed with two or more major health conditions, including arthritis, asthma, diabetes, hypertension, obesity, and stroke. Figure 2 compares the Madden/Wells sample with national averages and averages for black women. Madden/Wells respondents report such conditions at far higher rates than other Americans, with no improvements since 2005.
- Madden/Wells respondents also continue to suffer from poor mental health overall: 17 percent of respondents

reported poor overall mental health,<sup>4</sup> and 8 percent had major depressive episodes in the previous year<sup>5</sup>; there was no improvement over 2005 or 2001. However, as noted above, there was one bright spot: respondents in 2009 reported fewer anxiety episodes after relocation: 17 percent had such episodes in 2009, a significant decrease from the 2001 baseline, when 28 percent reported experiencing anxiety.

- Not only do Madden/Wells respondents experience high rates of disease, they are also markedly debilitated by their illnesses, reporting severe difficulty with activities of daily living at levels well above national averages. One in four respondents reported severe difficulty with three or more activities, compared with only 4 percent of the general population and 6 percent of black women.<sup>6</sup> Not surprisingly, more than one in three respondents (36 percent) reported that their physical health had interfered with their job or education in the previous year.
- Lack of access to quality medical care may play a role in poor health outcomes.

*“Residents’ reports indicate a population in distress, with extraordinarily high rates of chronic, debilitating illness. The only positive change since 2005 is a reduction in anxiety and worry, which may reflect respondents’ improved living circumstances.”*

FIGURE 2. Major Illness among HOPE VI Respondents and Nationwide Comparison Groups



Sources: 2001, 2005, and 2009 Chicago Panel Study Sample and 2008 National Health Interview Survey.

Note: Only arthritis experienced a significant change from 2005 at the  $p < .10$  level; total respondents who had ever been diagnosed with arthritis increased from 26 percent, which was significantly different from 2009 at the  $p < .05$  level.



Renee and her five youngest children live in a house on the far South Side of Chicago. She and her children have moved twice since they left Madden/Wells. They moved to their current house about nine months before we spoke to them. Renee suffers from clinical depression and is on disability because of her mental health problems. However, despite her ongoing problems, she says she feels less worried and sleeps better since she left public housing.

No, they did so much shooting [in Madden/Wells] and then people would come to your door. They'll ruin your house if you leave it open. . . . But I was just worrying . . . because one time I was looking out my window, a bullet went past my head and my daughter, the bullet came through the house. It went right through the wall. Came through, boom! And we had just walked from right by the wall. . . . So far, I don't be worrying about nothing [here].

Only 30 percent of the Madden/Wells respondents said they used a doctor's office for routine medical care, compared with 65 percent of Americans and 66 percent of black women. Instead of a doctor's office, most Madden/Wells respondents used a hospital outpatient clinic (41 percent) or a community health center (16 percent). Without a regular "medical home," Madden/Wells residents may not be able to effectively manage their chronic conditions. Respondents' use of dental care was closer to national averages, but still relatively low: 48 percent of residents had been to a dentist in the previous year, compared with 60 percent of Americans and 54 percent of black women.

### **Mortality Rates Are Shockingly High**

In 2005, we noted that death rates for the five-site HOPE VI Panel Study sample overall far exceeded national averages. As

a benchmark, we compared Panel Study rates to those for the Moving to Opportunity Demonstration control group; rates for the Panel Study sample were considerably higher (Manjarrez et al. 2007). The 2009 follow up of the Madden/Wells sample shows that for CHA families, this grim trend has continued: mortality rates are shockingly high.

- A stunning 14 percent of Madden/Wells respondents in the CHA Panel Study sample were deceased by 2009. The mortality rate for the Madden/Wells sample is approximately *twice as high* as in the general population, continuing the trend from 2005 (see figure 3).<sup>7</sup>
- To understand the factors that might underlie this high mortality rate, we conducted multivariate analysis. The results showed that once we controlled for such factors as age, male respondents and those who reported poor overall mental health at the baseline in 2001 were more likely to have died by 2009.<sup>8</sup>

Three years ago, Michelle and her daughter Tonya, now 18, moved from Madden/Wells into Oakwood Shores, the new mixed-income community. Michelle also has two adult children, whom she raised in Madden/Wells. She says she no longer feels worried and stressed out because she feels so much safer:

I used to worry my ass off . . . in Madden/Wells about shooting. . . .

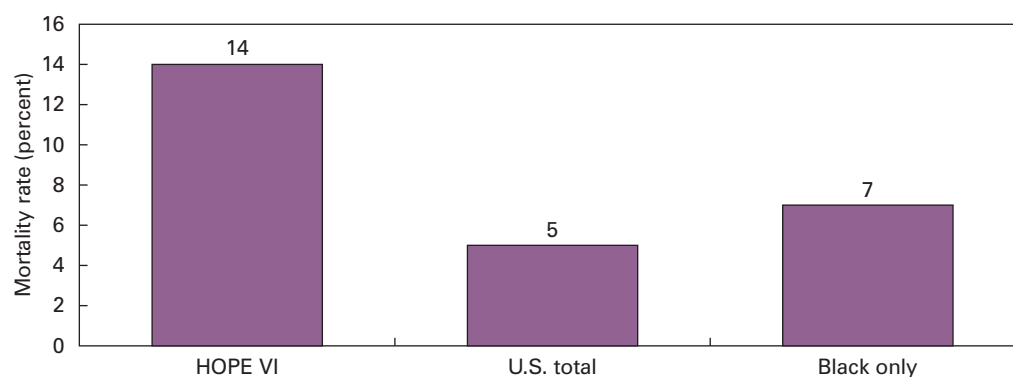
Q: So how has not worrying about that affected you and your family?

Well, I don't worry and be all stressed out and you know, shaking all the time now. I'm relaxed. I'm calming down. I enjoy myself.

---

*"14 percent of Madden/Wells respondents were deceased by 2009. The mortality rate is approximately twice as high as in the general population, continuing the trend from 2005."*

FIGURE 3. Mortality Rates in HOPE VI and Comparison Populations



Sources: 2009 Chicago Panel Study Sample and 2004 National Vital Statistics Reports.

## Implications

The overall CHA Panel Study findings suggest that it has been easier to improve residents' life circumstances than to address their physical and emotional health. That is, the CHA has succeeded in providing residents with better housing in less poor neighborhoods that are dramatically safer than their original public housing developments. But moving to better quality housing in a safer community has not been enough to undo the damage that years of living in a dangerous, stressful environment has done to residents' health. Assuming Madden/Wells respondents are reasonably representative of other CHA households (and other research suggests they are),<sup>9</sup> the overall CHA population remains extremely vulnerable, with too many residents suffering from serious, chronic conditions that impede their functioning, particularly their ability to work. To address this worsening crisis, the CHA must increase its focus on health and form partnerships to bring services to its residents. Specifically, the CHA should

- **Strengthen its partnerships with public and nonprofit agencies that can provide improved health services for its residents.** For example, the agency should work with the Department of Public Health to ensure that federally qualified health centers are located near their developments. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS)

Public Housing Primary Care Centers provide one avenue for funding such centers. Another possibility is reaching out to local hospitals and medical centers in Chicago that can provide mobile vans to offer regular primary health care and dental care to CHA's residents. Finally, the CHA should explore other options, such as public health interventions that train residents to be community health workers.

- **Promote healthy living and physical activity.** CHA residents will not be physically active unless they feel safe being outside. Therefore, the most critical thing that the CHA can do is work to sustain the safety improvements in its public housing and mixed-income developments that have so improved the overall quality of life for its residents. The agency should also look for resources or partnerships to create recreation centers in or near its developments, or potentially to provide "scholarships" for gym membership for CHA residents.
- **Consider alternative definitions of self-sufficiency.** As we have written previously (see Popkin 2010), while the emphasis of the Plan for Transformation has been on helping residents improve their economic circumstances, poor health might make work an unrealistic goal for many. The CHA may want to consider alternative standards for these residents, instead helping them manage their health conditions effectively as a means to reducing their use of emergency

and other services. Providing support and incentives for obtaining mental health services is especially important, particularly for residents with young children.

## Notes

1. All reported differences in means and proportions are significant at the  $p < .10$  level.
2. National health data in this brief, unless otherwise noted, are published by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services as the 2008 National Health Interview Survey (NHIS) age-adjusted summary health statistics for U.S. adults. Many health problems vary significantly by gender and race, and because over 88 percent of the adults in the Madden/Wells sample are women and all are black, a sample of black women nationally is used as the comparison group. National Health Interview Survey data are broken down by sex and race, but not further by poverty status. Nationally, approximately a third of all black women live in households with incomes below the poverty level. Therefore, the comparison data are biased slightly upward in terms of better health because of the relatively better economic well-being of the national population of black women compared with the HOPE VI sample. However, even limiting the comparisons to similar gender, race, and age groups, adults in the HOPE VI study experience health problems more often than other demographically similar groups.
3. Change in health status was modeled using a multivariate logistic regression; the dependent variable was whether health was reported as fair or poor in 2009 among those who reported excellent, very good, or good health in 2001. Those with higher ages ( $p < .05$ ) and those who had been in public housing for at least 10 years ( $p < .05$ ) were more likely to report such a negative change, while housing assistance status in 2009, gender, having an income under \$10,000, depression, and overall mental health in 2001 were also controlled for, and not associated with changes in overall health status.
4. Overall mental health is based on the mental health inventory five-item scale (MHI-5).
5. Major depressive episodes are based on the Composite International Diagnostic Interview Short Form (CIDI-SF) major depression index for episodes over the past year.
6. Respondents were asked how difficult it is to perform each of seven activities: walk a quarter of a mile; climb 10 steps without resting; stand for two hours; sit for two hours; stoop, bend, or kneel; reach over their heads; and carry 10 pounds. Severe difficulty is defined as a response of "very difficult" or "can't do at all." Comparisons are from non-age-adjusted NHIS sample adult file from 2008.
7. The mortality rate for the general population is calculated by determining the probability that each respondent would survive based on averages for people of their age and sex, using a 2004 National Vital Statistics Reports life table.
8. Mortality was modeled using a multivariate logistic regression. Those with higher ages ( $p < .01$ ), men ( $p < .05$ ), and those who reported poor mental health in 2001 ( $p < .10$ ) were more likely to have died by 2009. Depression, chronic health conditions, poor overall health, incomes under \$10,000, and being a public housing resident for at least 10 years in 2001 were also controlled for, and not associated with mortality.
9. See Popkin (2010) and Ernst (2007) for discussions of CHA residents' health.

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## About the Authors



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**Susan J. Popkin** is director of the Urban Institute's Program on Neighborhoods and Youth Development and a senior fellow in the Metropolitan Housing and Communities Policy Center.

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