Office of Comprehensive Planning

October
2026

SOUTH

DISTRICT PROFILE



South

District Profile

ACS 5-Year Estimates (2024)

Compiled August 2026

SOUTH DISTRICT AT A GLANCE

Total Population	Median Age	Median Income	Poverty Rate
31,315	42	28,259	36%

District Boundaries



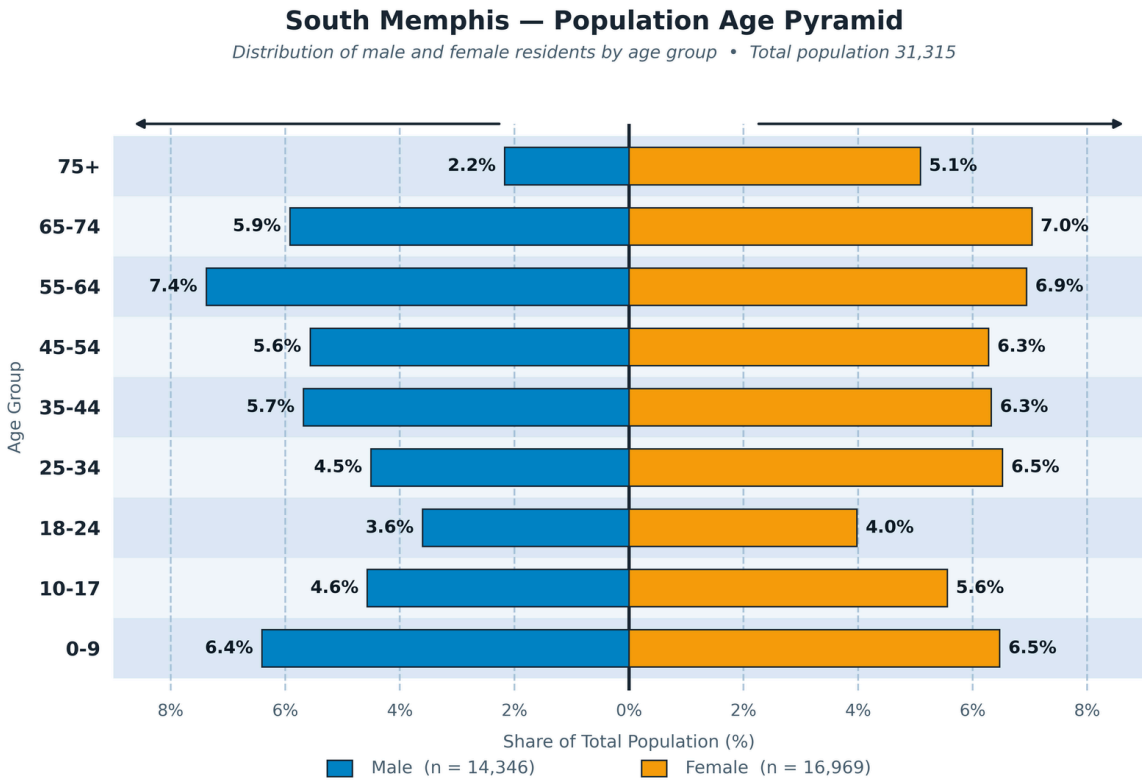
The South Planning District is bound by the Core City to the north, Airways Boulevard to the east, Interstate 240 to the south, and the Mississippi River to the west.

Population & Age Breakdown

South Memphis is home to 31,315 residents across 13,434 households, with a median age of 42. The district has lost nearly a *third* of its population over the past 15 years, and average household size has followed a similar trend, falling from about 2.8 people per household to 2.3 today. That population loss has coincided with a district that now skews notably older, with residents 55 and up making up a larger share of the population than at almost any point in its recent profile.

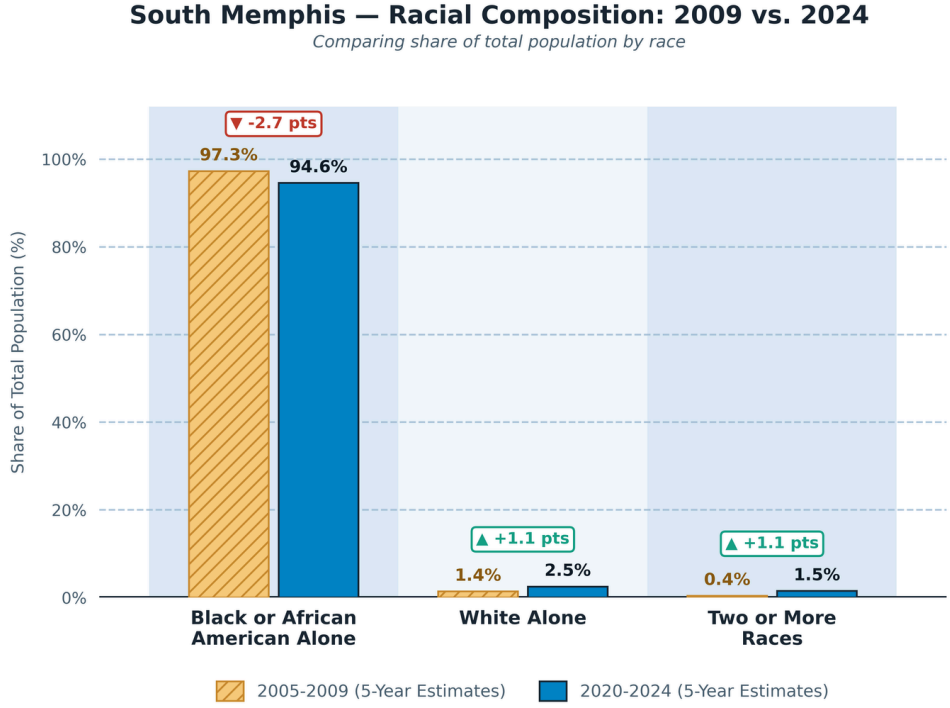
Population Change since 2009	**-30.4%**
Total Households	**13,434**
Average Household Size	**2.33**

Distribution By Age Group, Sex & Racial Composition



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, ACS 2020-2024 (5-Year Estimates), B01001: Sex By Age, Compiled by the Office of Comprehensive Planning

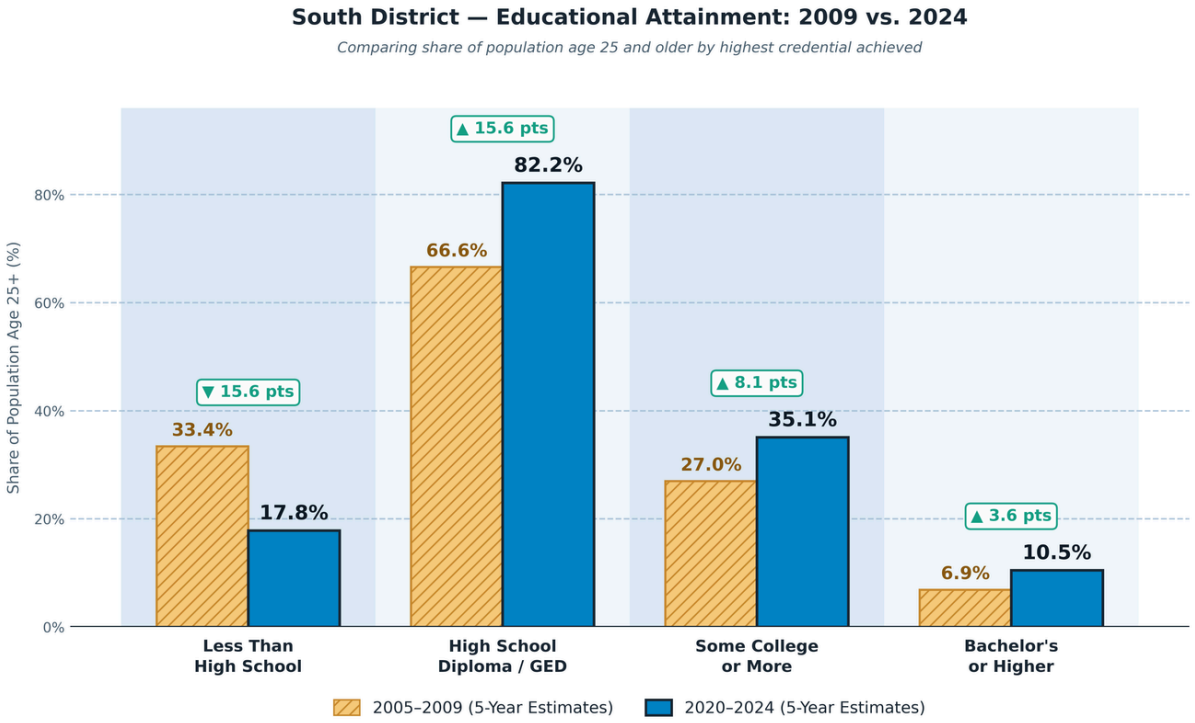
Population pyramids show how a community's population is distributed across age groups and by sex, making generational patterns easier to see. In South Memphis, residents under 18 make up about 23% of the population, while those 65 and older make up roughly 20%, putting the youngest and oldest segments of the district at nearly the same size. The largest single bands are 55 to 64 and 65 to 74, meaning the district has about as many residents entering retirement as it does children.



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, ACS 2020-2024 (5-Year Estimates), A03001, Compiled by the Office of Comprehensive Planning

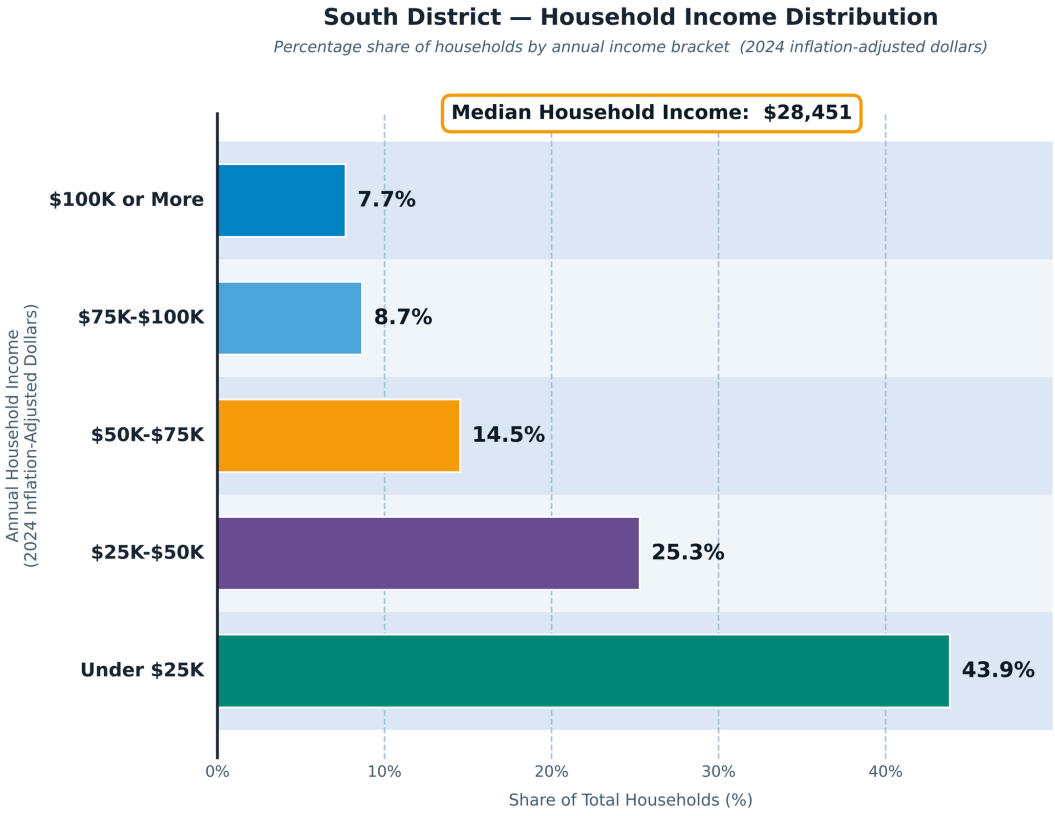
Racial data offers a window into who makes up our communities and helps identify disparities across Memphis. In South Memphis, the population is majority Black or African American at 94.6%, followed by White residents at 2.5% and residents identifying as Two or More Races at 1.5% This makeup has remained largely unchanged since 2009, with the greatest single share falling just short of 3%.

Educational Attainment & Income Distribution



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, ACS 2020-2024 (5-Year Estimates), A12001, Compiled by the Office of Comprehensive Planning

Educational attainment is a key indicator of long-term economic mobility, as it shapes a community's workforce competitiveness, influences the local tax base, and plays a central role in breaking generational cycles of poverty. South Memphis has seen gains at every level since 2009. The share of residents without a high school diploma was nearly halved, from 33.4% to 17.8%, while those with some college or more rose by 8%. Bachelor's attainment also climbed 3.6%. Education stands out as one of the clearest areas of growth in South Memphis, and the steady gains across every level point to a meaningful shift for most residents over the past fifteen years.



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, ACS 2020-2024 (5-Year Estimates), A14001, Compiled by the Office of Comprehensive Planning

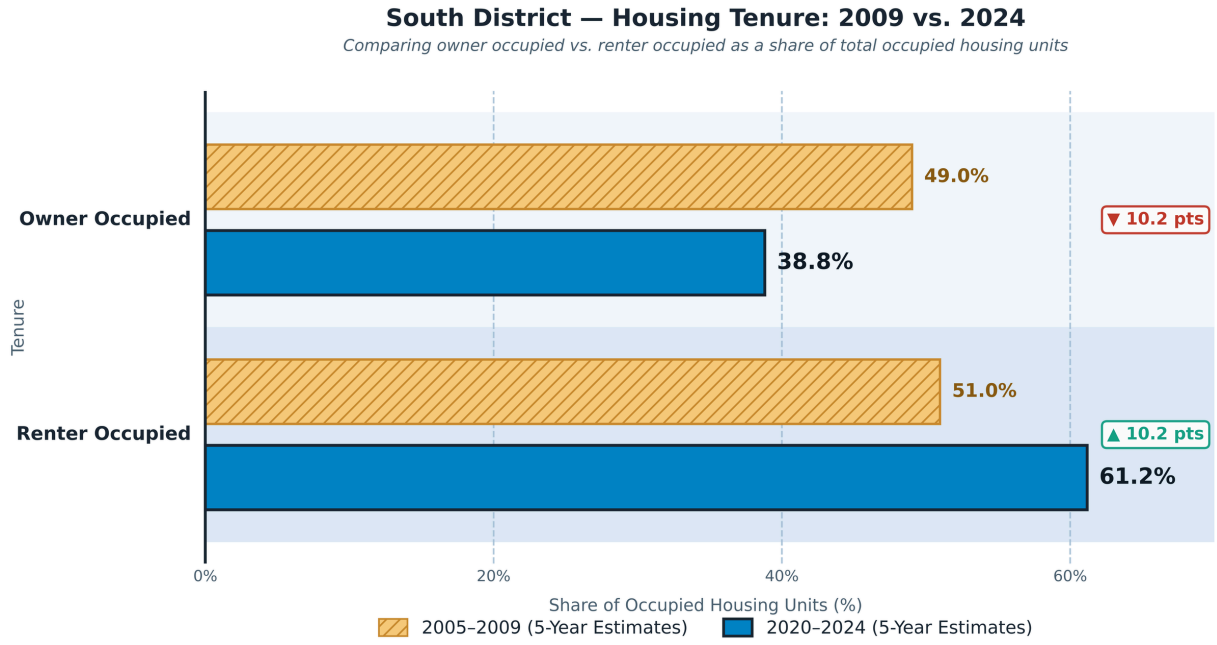
Income Distribution Continued

Household income distribution is one of the most direct indicators of a community's economic health, showing not only how much residents earn but how that income is spread across households. In inflation-adjusted terms, median household income has held essentially flat since 2009, with a real change of roughly 1%. The shape of the distribution has barely moved either. Close to seven in ten households earned under $50,000 fifteen years ago, and roughly the same share do today. Although these figures may look stable on paper, the reality is more challenging. As wages have stagnated for households over the last fifteen years, necessities have continually risen, slowly placing more economic strain on residents.

Housing Characteristics

Total Housing Units	Median Rent	Total Occupancy Rate	Median Year Built
17,530	$901	76.6%	1945

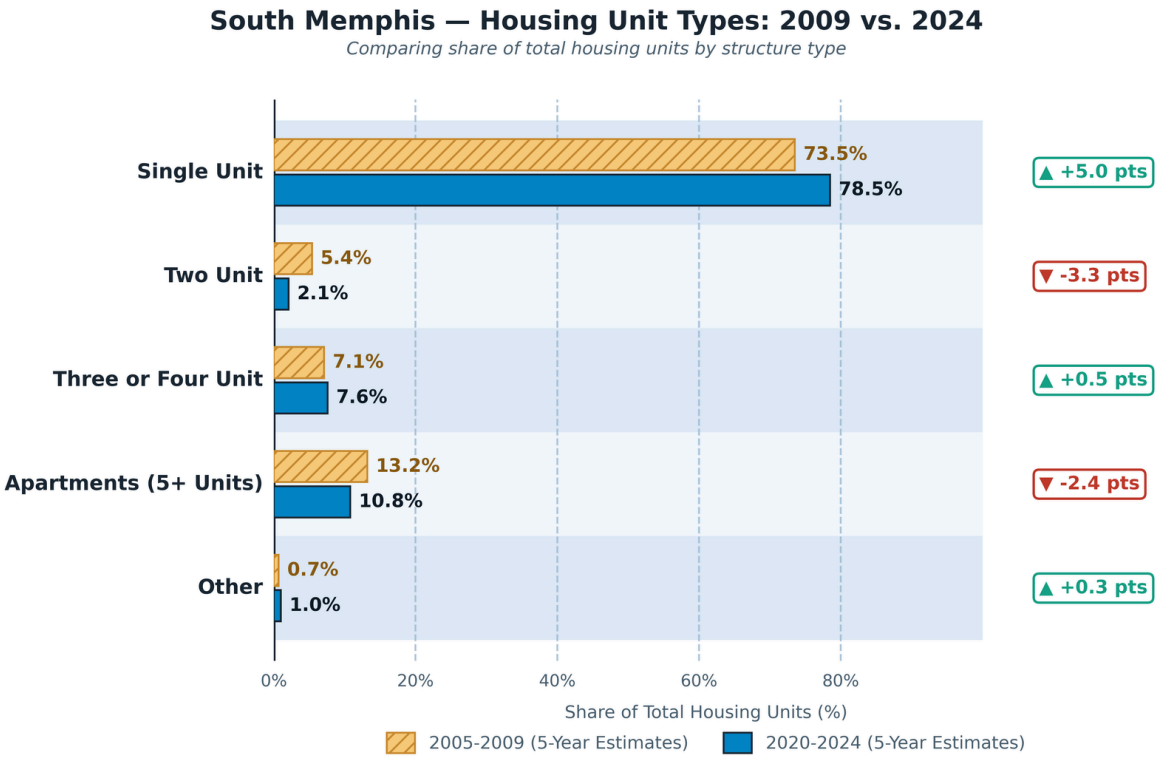
Housing characteristics offer a broad snapshot of a district's residential landscape, encompassing the size, condition, cost, and availability of its housing stock. With a median year built of 1945 and a median monthly rent of $901, the district's housing is among the oldest in the City while sitting at one of the lowest rent points among the fourteen planning districts. A majority of homes are renter occupied, and that share that has grown since 2009, when renters and owners were split almost evenly. The shift toward renting has been steep, with owner occupancy falling over 10% in fifteen years. This change in tenure has taken place during a period where average renting costs have practically remained stagnant.



Housing Characteristics Continued

Percentage of Off-Market Vacancies	Homeowners with a Mortgage or Similar Debt	Cost-Burdened Renters (>30% of Income)	Cost-Burdened Homeowners (>30% of Income)
90.5%	26.1%	51.6%	26.2%

Housing cost burden and vacancy data offer a deeper look into the financial pressures residents face and the availability of housing within the market. In South Memphis, just 26.1% of homeowners carry a mortgage or similar debt, likely a reflection of an older, long-owned housing stock. The greatest cost burden falls on renters, as more than half are spending at least 30% of their income on housing, and roughly a third of all renters spend at least half. That is double the 26.2% cost-burden rate among homeowners. Of the district's vacant units, 90.5% are off-market, neither for rent nor for sale, a share far higher than in other districts and a strong signal of abandoned or deteriorated housing.



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, ACS 2020-2024 (5-Year Estimates), A10032, Compiled by the Office of Comprehensive Planning

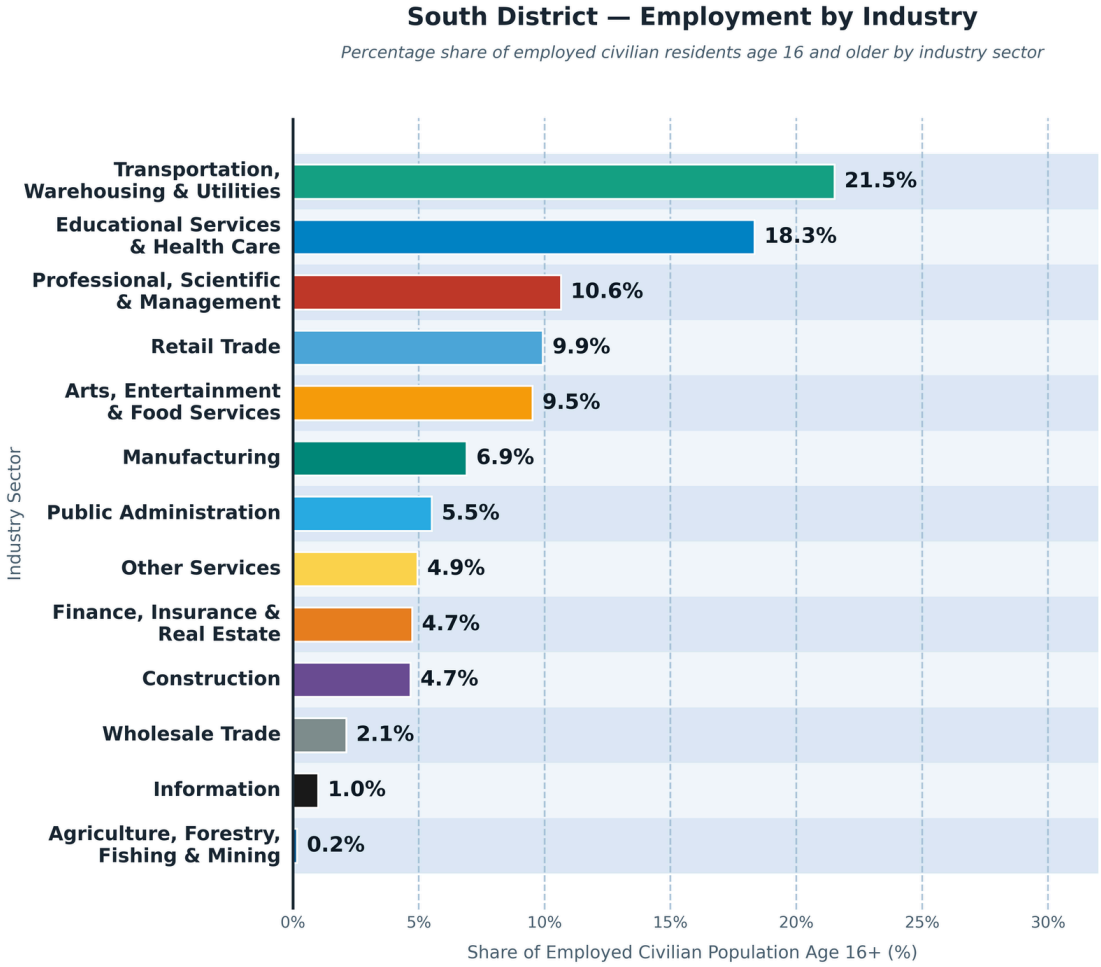
Housing unit type data describes the physical makeup, character and variety of housing available to residents. In South Memphis, single unit structures make up the overwhelming majority of the housing stock at 78.5%. This distribution has shifted modestly since 2009, when single unit structures stood at 73.5% and apartments at 13.2%, with single-family homes gaining ground as apartments thinned. The pattern of the single-family share rising while multifamily and two-unit structures shrink reinforces what the tenure data shows. The district's pronounced move toward renting has occurred within its existing single-family houses rather than through new multifamily construction, meaning former owner-occupied homes are increasingly becoming rentals.

Poverty Rates

Family Poverty Rate	Seniors Living in Poverty	Children Living in Poverty
36%	29.5%	71.4%

Family poverty in South Memphis fell from 40.0% in 2009 to 35.8% in 2024, a decline of 4.2 points, even as the district lost nearly a third of its population and saw one of the steepest household declines of any district covered over the same period. Despite some gains, nearly three quarters of the youth population is still currently living in poverty,

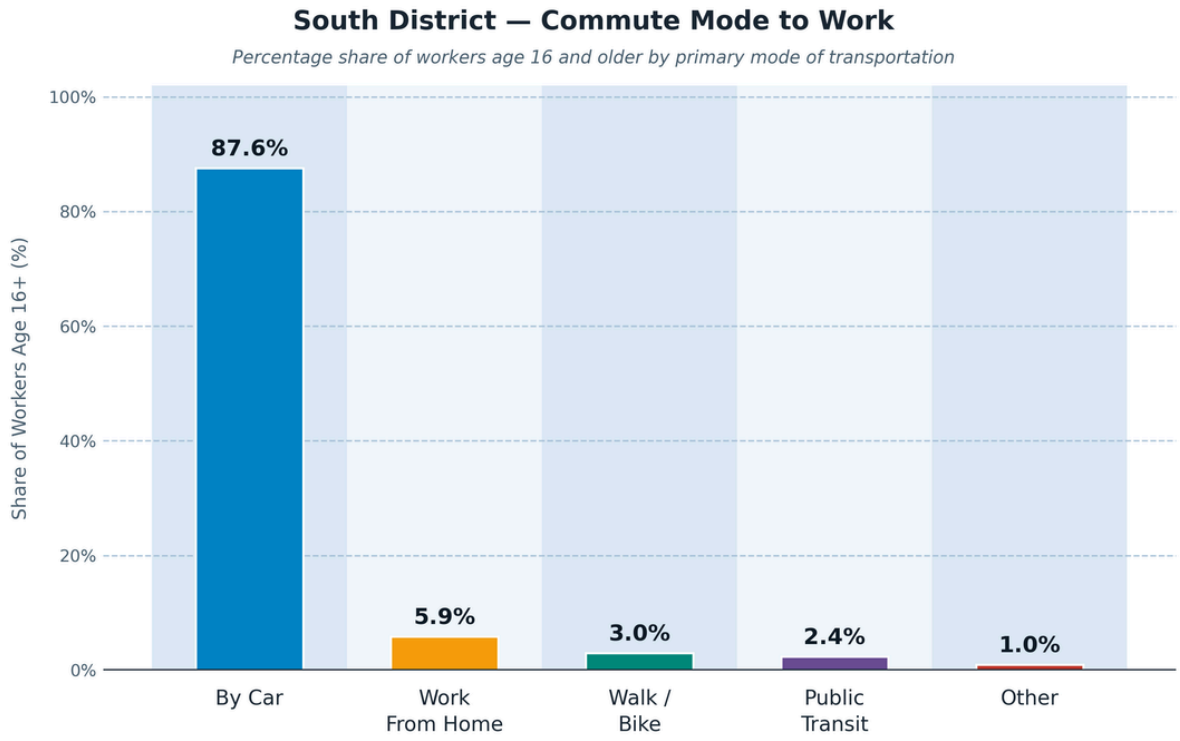
Employment by Industry



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, ACS 2020-2024 (5-Year Estimates), A17004, Compiled by the Office of Comprehensive Planning

Over one in five residents are employed in the transportation, warehousing, and utilities industry, followed closely by educational services and health care. The high share of blue-collar workers in transportation and adjacent fields can likely be attributed to the districts close proximity to the Mississippi River, interstate system, and its corresponding industrial footprint which is home to multiple industrial parks, ports, railyards, and other large-scale employment centers. The same can likely be said for healthcare oriented roles, with a handful of major hospitals located just a few miles north of the districts boundaries. Although the two lead industries currently provide a stable source of employment for a significant portion of the population, South Memphis is left more economically vulnerable to industry-specific downturns in these fields.

Commute Data



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, ACS 2020-2024 (5-Year Estimates), A09005, Compiled by the Office of Comprehensive Planning

In South Memphis, 87.6% of workers age 16 and older commute by car, with working from home the second largest share at 5.9%. Walking, biking, public transit, and other modes together account for the remaining 6.4%. The heavy reliance on cars carries particular weight given the area's low incomes, since car ownership and upkeep claim a large share of household budget. The low work-from-home rate also reflects the district's workforce, which is concentrated in transportation, warehousing, and service jobs that require workers to be physically present rather than the office roles most able to shift remote.

District Summary

Home to just over 31,000 residents, the South district is among the most racially uniform in the city, with a Black or African American population near 95%, and it holds one of Memphis's oldest age profile with a growing share of residents nearing or past retirement. Women form a clear majority across the adult years and are most pronounced in the older age groups. Its housing is largely renter-occupied, having shifted steadily away from ownership over the past fifteen years, and its workforce draws on Transportation, Warehousing, and Utilities alongside Educational Services and Health Care, connecting residents both to the region's freight economy and to the institutions that serve the community.

Like many of Memphis's districts, South has seen its population thin over the past fifteen years, and questions of economic opportunity and support for its youngest and oldest residents remain central to its future. At the same time, the district has made real gains in educational attainment at every level, and its deep roots reflect an enduring sense of place. These are the marks of a community with a clear identity and a settled character, one whose long-standing strengths give it a meaningful foundation to build on as it works to expand opportunity in the years ahead.