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**PROBLEM FAMILIES IN PUBLIC HOUSING**  
**Baltimore, Maryland**



**HOUSING AUTHORITY OF BALTIMORE CITY**

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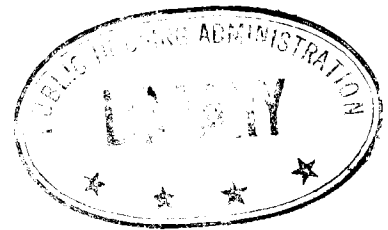
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*L* PROBLEM FAMILIES IN PUBLIC HOUSING /  
Baltimore, Maryland



*Baltimore*, HOUSING AUTHORITY, OF BALTIMORE CITY

Research and Statistics Division

1956

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This publication consists of the first thirteen pages of the report on "Problem Families in Public Housing". These pages give the background and summarize the findings of the study. There is only a limited number of copies of the full 48-page report, which analyzes the data in greater detail.

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## PREFACE

This study was undertaken because of the growing concern of this and other housing authorities throughout the country with the increasing magnitude of problem families in low-rent public housing. As a first step in learning something about the nature of problem families in Baltimore's low-rent housing projects, some data were collected on the subject in 1954. Early in that year, the Director of Management requested each project manager to submit case histories of ten problem families he considered to be the most difficult. No criteria as to what constituted a problem family were suggested--the decision on this matter and the selection of the families was left entirely to the managers, as it was part of the objective to learn what constituted problems in the eyes of the project staffs.

As a result of this request, 152 case studies of problem families were submitted. The data were carefully reviewed by the Management Division. Following that, they were turned over to the Research and Statistics Division for study and evaluation. An intensive analysis of this material resulted in a valuable report entitled "A Preliminary Analysis of Problem Families in Public Housing". It was felt, however, that the data were derived from a sample that was inadequate for reaching sound generalizations and final conclusions for management action. Therefore, a more systematic and comprehensive study was undertaken by the Research and Statistics Division. For this study each project reported on all of its problem families, using similar criteria and submitting consistent data.

The study was supervised and this report written by Mrs. Sara Hartman, Assistant Director of Research and Statistics. Acknowledgement is made of the fine cooperation of the project management staffs in filling out the schedules that constituted the source material for this study. The report has been reviewed carefully by Management staff members and has benefited from comments furnished.

## INTRODUCTION

There has been a growing concern in public housing about the increase in problem families among the tenants. Why this has occurred is better understood than what should be done about it. The increase in problem families is clearly related to the changing economic picture in the country from the time the first low-rent projects were built in the late thirties to the post-World War II situation.

During the depression years, many families that would ordinarily have been self-reliant found themselves unable to afford decent housing. As the economic picture improved during and after World War II, those families whose poor financial position was based on the low level of the economy improved their situations and no longer needed the assistance of public housing. Many of the families who remained eligible were those where the financial distress stemmed not from the external factors in the economy but from internal factors in the family. Thus the proportion of troubled or "problem" families in the public housing population increased.

The changing nature of the public housing population has been the subject of many discussions among public housing officials. In recent years, housing conferences and informal meetings of housing management personnel have frequently had on the agenda the subject of the kinds of families applying for public housing, and the legal and moral considerations involved in excluding "troublesome" or "undesirable" families.<sup>1/</sup>

Some took the position that "asocial", "undesirable" or "difficult" families should not be admitted to public housing. They rationalized the exclusion of these families on several grounds. The first was related to the effect of these families on the other tenants and the concern that the behavior of some of these difficult families might carry over to others and bring down the general level of the project. Also, the acceptance of troublesome families with disturbing behavior patterns might be offensive to some of the more stable tenants and induce them to move before they might be able to afford decent housing in the private market. "Undesirable" families in the projects might have an unfavorable effect on the reputations of the projects and thereby discourage some eligible families in the community in need of public housing from applying. A further reason of those who felt that problem families should not be admitted to public housing was based on the feeling that it was unfair for good, hard-working families, struggling to get along but set back by low earning capacity, illness, large families to support, or other factors, to be denied apartments while other families, weakened by drinking, low moral standards, inability to accept responsibility or to hold jobs, were given units.

These compelling arguments were countered by others who felt that public housing authorities had an obligation to house a cross-section of low-income families in the community--not just well-behaved "model" families that would give the management staff little "trouble". An additional factor was the concern for the

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<sup>1/</sup> See NAHO Reports, 19th Annual Conference, October 1952, Session on "Problem Families--and Families with Special Needs". See also, Journal of Housing December 1954, p. 425, and March 1955, p. 77.

children of problem families. Public housing has always laid heavy emphasis on the welfare of children and given preference to families with children. Why should the children of "problem families" be denied an opportunity of a decent place to live? Perhaps even more than children from stable families they need at least a pleasant physical environment.

Difficult, troubled, and troublesome families were a part of every community and had to be accepted, not discriminated against in public housing. The problem could not be eliminated by refusing to accept such families--it could only be shifted to other areas of the community where there would be even less regard and concern for their welfare.

No official policy on the federal or local level was set down. The discussions continued, and persons in important, decision-making positions made their decisions on a day-to-day basis, inevitably influenced by their own position on this subject. With the passage of the Housing Act of 1949, a new element entered the picture. Now all eligible families displaced by slum clearance were, by law, given preference for apartments in public housing projects. The local authority Commission and staff could no longer, in this group at least, decide whether or not a particular family should be excluded. Some "problem" families" were to become tenants in public housing through the preference granted them because of their displacement.

Some families that might have been considered problem families left the site before or shortly after acquisition. These families had no interest in having their activities or source of income looked into too closely. Others with difficult family situations took advantage of the opportunity to move into public housing.

After an initial period of becoming aware of the changing nature of a segment of the public housing population, responsible officials accepted this fact as a reality and channeled their interest into developing attitudes and techniques for helping in the rehabilitation of these families.

Mr. Oliver C. Winston, Executive Director of the Housing Authority of Baltimore City, in his monthly column in the Journal of Housing, while President of NAHRO<sup>1/</sup>, pointed out that it was necessary to "...recognize the need to find some answer to our problem family other than vigilantly keeping them out of public housing. Our management programs must be adapted to the characteristics of today's low-income families."

That this position has gained acceptance is evidenced by the statement published in the August-September 1955 Journal of Housing, giving the "Concept of Public Housing Management", developed by NAHRO's 1953-54 Management Committee and approved by the Board of Governors. The statement contains the following paragraph:

"Public housing management, as a prime responsibility, must recognize the need to so organize its operations--by policy--by staff--that it can bring genuine understanding to the problems of the families it serves (and to the

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<sup>1/</sup> Oliver C. Winston, "The NAHRO President's Corner", Journal of Housing, March 1954, p. 99.



individuals who comprise those families) and can arrange to have those problems receive the full assistance of the public and private community agencies staffed by people skilled in case work or rehabilitation work."

A first step in developing policy and staff procedures for meeting the needs of families with special problems is an understanding of the nature and characteristics of these families. The report that follows presents a detailed picture of problem families in Baltimore's low-rent housing projects and some of the implications thereof. It is hoped that this information will contribute to greater insight and more precise formulation than was formerly possible on the extent and the nature of problem families in public housing in Baltimore.

#### Procedure Used

On the basis of the data contained in the original 152 case studies of problem families, a picture emerged of the kinds of information required to make meaningful analysis of the situation. From this was developed a schedule to be filled out at each project for every family considered to be a problem. The schedule used is in an Appendix to this report. An effort was made to encourage the projects to include all problem families. In the instructions that accompanied the schedules, some guide lines were set up as to what was meant by "problem families"; however, it was made clear that the definitions were not intended in any way to limit the project staff or exclude any family they felt should be included. The instructions read:

"Include every family you consider to be a problem. "Problem families" include those who have difficulties they cannot handle; require continuing assistance in obtaining services from social and welfare agencies in the community; become involved in difficulties with other tenants; or for any other reason require more than their share of the time and efforts of the management staff."

The section that follows summarizes the data resulting from the answers given to the twenty-six questions asked about the 355 problem families for whom schedules were filled out by the staffs of the 14 low-rent projects. These 355 problem families constituted five percent of the total families in those projects.

Most of the tables in the report combine the data for all of the projects. Information on any of the aspects covered is available for the individual projects in the Authority's Research and Statistics Division.

## SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

### What is a "Problem Family"?

There may be some reaction to calling the tenants with whom this report deals "problem families". One could use the language "families with problems" or "troubled families". However, there are many families with problems that never become "problem families"; the family members have the strength and the resources to cope with the difficulties they face, sometimes seeking and using help from outside individuals or agencies but somehow mobilizing the family unit to deal on a short-term or a long-term basis with the problems that beset them. The "problem family" is one that cannot cope with the difficulties with which it is faced and comes to the attention of the management staff.

There are instances of family situations among the tenants where extreme hardships are met and dealt with. These families with severe problems did not become "problem families". In one project, there is a situation where the husband is a quadruple amputee, resulting from a pathological blood condition. His wife, who is in her early thirties, obtained a job in a laundry that is not far from the project and she returns home at noon every day to give her husband his lunch. She supports him completely, with no outside assistance, on an annual income of less than \$2,000. Their apartment is clean and attractive. His mother visits frequently and does a great deal of work maintaining a nice garden in front of their apartment.

In another family, which consists of an aged couple, both over 65, the wife has for several years been bedridden. The husband works as a handyman and earns less than \$1,500 a year. In addition, he does all the marketing, cooking, and housework. Regular free nursing service is the only outside help this family receives.

Sometimes families find themselves in such circumstances they must have help in making an adjustment. Health problems are often at the core of family difficulties. The trouble may arise from the illness of the father, the mother, or the children, presenting problems of dislocation of family roles in addition to severe financial drain. Families that can use help make the necessary short-term or long-term adjustment to the situation in which they find themselves.

The problem families with whom it is hardest to work are the ones that will not seek help or use it if it is offered. Frequently, the characters and personalities of those involved, which keep them from availing themselves of help, are directly related to the external problems they face. An example would be the man who is perennially delinquent in his rent payments, and requesting rent adjustments and extensions because of unemployment, losing jobs and changing jobs. Efforts to arrange for job counselling and case work in order to examine the reason for this poor job history fail. The same personality factors that made for his job instability would also be operating in his failure to follow through and to keep appointments.

One of the main impressions from this study is that many problem families won't reach out for help that might be available, and won't accept help even if it is offered to them. In dealing with problem families, not only in public housing but in the larger community, a major concern appears to

be how to motivate families (or the individuals who make them up) to want to change and do things differently. How can they be given the desire to make that investment of themselves that is a prerequisite to change? Some may be emotionally handicapped individuals severely limited in their capacity for social living, others are very difficult to help because of their limited intelligence and ability, but many others can be reached.

In one low-rent housing project, 86 percent of the problem families were described as being "uncooperative", "unresponsive", "not interested", etc.; in another, 70 percent. No direct question was asked on this point and the information was derived from the remarks freely entered under "Comments". Because of this we can only say that in some of the projects a large proportion of the problem families were considered to be very difficult with which to work and efforts to do so appeared to be unavailing.

There is, of course, a subjective element involved in individual decisions as to whether a family is a problem and in determining how responsive the family is to efforts to help it. The background of the staff member and his experience in working with troubled families undoubtedly affect his evaluation and his relationship with such families.

Working with unresponsive families is at best very difficult. But, if positive results are to be obtained, it is extremely important that the staff member feel that improvement is possible or he will not be able to lift the family from its inertia and discouragement. This calls for a staff that is highly skilled and has a basic understanding of family dynamics.

#### The Extent of the Problem

The proportion of tenants reported to be problem families was not extensive. No project included more than 10 percent of its families as problems, and some projects had as few as one percent. Half of the 14 low-rent projects reported that less than five percent of their tenants were difficult or troublesome families. Of the total families in these projects, five percent were considered to be problems, or six percent if we exclude the three war-housing projects recently converted to low-rent use.

The number of families involved, ranging from four at two projects to 78 at the largest project (the latter also being the one with the highest proportion of problem families), is not, in most projects, of great magnitude. Yet, a large amount of work and staff time may be required in dealing with these families.<sup>1/</sup> Almost by definition, problem families are time-consuming

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<sup>1/</sup> The extent to which a small group of families can absorb the time and budget of one or more agencies can be seen from recent studies in four widely separated and very different communities, one of which is Washington County, Maryland. The others are located in Minnesota and California. It was found that a small number of the total families in these communities was absorbing a very large proportion of all the health, assistance, and adjustment services. (Community Research Associates, Inc., The Prevention and Control of Indigent Disability in Washington County, Maryland, 1954, p. 12.)

families. They are expensive families, too, in that they are frequently poor rent-payers. More than two-fifths (43 percent) of the problem families in Baltimore's low-rent projects were considered to be rent-paying problems. However, very few families were found to be problems only because of their poor rent-paying practices---usually this was accompanied by other factors, as later analysis will show.

There was a greater concentration of problem families among white tenants than among the Negroes. This is related to the differential in incomes between white and Negro families and the comparative availability of decent housing for both groups. Because of the low level of incomes for Negroes, many stable families with no particular handicaps are eligible for public housing. In addition, the dearth of good housing at moderate rentals for Negro families makes public housing a very desirable objective.

#### Problem Families Identified Early

Two-thirds of the problem families became known as such to the staff immediately or shortly after moving into the project. This indicates that many of these families were already in difficult situations when they entered the projects.

#### Types of Problems

An attempt was made to determine what factors entered into the families' problems. Almost 60 percent of the problem families were reported to have financial difficulties. This is the factor that appeared most frequently. Health problems, affecting 41 percent of the families, was next in importance. Difficulties with neighbors, inadequate parents, and poor house-keeping, were other items that appeared frequently among the problem families.

In most instances, more than one factor appeared in each family. The average problem family had three factors at the core of its difficulties.

#### Incomes of Problem Families

The incomes of the problem families having financial difficulties were not considerably below that for all project tenants. The median annual income for the problem families with financial difficulties was \$1,993, or \$131 below the median of \$2,064 for all tenants. Three-quarters of these problem families had incomes of less than \$2,500 per year, and 29 percent had less than \$1,500 annually. Job instability appeared to be one of the most important causes of financial difficulties. In over one-fifth of the families where there were financial problems, there was evidence of job instability.

#### Illness

Poor health is closely related to family breakdown. The major kind of illness was of an emotional nature. Over one-fifth of the instances of illness involved persons considered to be mentally or emotionally ill. There was twice as much mental illness among the white problem families than among the Negro ones--21 percent as compared with nine percent. In most instances, the difficulty was located in the parents rather than in the children.

Physical handicaps occurred with the next greatest frequency, accounting for 13 percent of the illnesses. Diseases of the respiratory system, consisting primarily of tuberculosis, followed (8%); heart disorders and diseases of the genitourinary system (more than half were of a gynecological nature) were next in frequency.

### Helping Problem Families

An attempt was made to determine the kinds of help problem families needed to deal with their difficulties. Most often mentioned was "case work", required by over one-fifth of the families. "Long-term financial help" was next, "medical care" followed, and then "housekeeping training". It was found that there is a great need for various kinds of counselling and case work, including marital counselling, vocational guidance, parental guidance, budget training, as well as psychiatric treatment.

Almost three-quarters of the problem families needed more than one kind of help, in the judgment of project staffs. A few families needed six or more different kinds of help. The average was three different kinds of help for the white families and two for the Negro families.

To the question, "Are the kinds of assistance these families need provided by agencies in the city?", the overwhelming answer was "Yes". In 94 percent of the problem families it was felt that the kinds of help required were available. However, when asked the follow-up question, "Do you think the necessary help can be obtained for this family?", far fewer said "Yes". A major reason for this negative answer was the feeling that many families would not accept or use help if it were offered.

In other instances, the family was receiving routine supervision from the Department of Public Welfare, and although the project staff member felt that they needed more intensive case work the welfare worker did not agree that the situation warranted it, or because of work load could not give it. In some situations, such as the need for psychiatric treatment, out-patient services are available in the city but waiting lists are long, especially for children. For adults, although services are more quickly obtained, facilities are still very inadequate. Some needs were not being provided for in the community, such as constructive and satisfying activities for aged persons. Some individuals appeared to be too limited to use help.

According to the knowledge of the project staff at the time of this study, 50 percent of the problem families were currently receiving help from some public or private agency. This means that half of the problem families were not in contact with any agency to receive help with their problems. An analysis of the difficulties present in the problem families indicated a much greater concentration of problems among the families currently receiving help from some public or private agency than among the families not being helped. However, of the families not receiving help, 44 percent had financial difficulties, over a quarter were having difficulties with neighbors, a fifth had health problems, were considered to be inadequate parents, and/or had poor housekeeping habits.

The Department of Public Welfare was the agency most often mentioned as a source of help. Next most frequently mentioned was the Probation Department, largely because family members--adults and children--were under the

supervision of probation officers. In some instances, families were receiving support payments through the Probation Department. Hospitals and clinics were also often mentioned as sources of help. Private case work agencies followed in frequency of utilization, with organized charities like the Catholic and Jewish Charities next.

About half (52 percent) of the problem families had received assistance from some private or public agency in the past, including public assistance. Two-thirds of these families were still receiving help.

One-third of the problem families were receiving public assistance. A much greater proportion of the problem families than of the general population in the projects were receiving this kind of help.

About each problem family a question was asked regarding efforts which had been made to obtain help for the family which had been unsuccessful or which had not been followed through. It appeared from the replies that for most of the problem families attempts have not been made to assist them in obtaining help in working out their problems. In many instances this is related to the feeling or the experience of the project staff that the families would not be responsive to efforts to assist them. The readiness or the ability to use help does not remain static and as circumstances change some families that were unresponsive and disinterested might become more accessible.

It is difficult for anyone not directly involved in working with these troubled families to say that more should be done, or that more can be done. Yet, the data submitted indicate that in some of the situations possibly more can be done. However, it would be unrealistic not to recognize that many of the problems that involve project families cannot be separated from problems in the community as a whole. The entire area of working with multiproblem families is an extremely complex one that is concerning all of the helping professions. Community agencies are not yet adequately geared for working with these difficult multiproblem family situations.

### Outlook for the Future

What is the prognosis for the problem families? Can we expect that their problems will be resolved? The outlook was hopeful for about 60 percent of the families. There was far more optimism about the Negro families than about the white. However, even where the outlook for the families was favorable, in most instances this was not considered to be a simple or short-range matter. In three-quarters of the instances where it was felt that the families' problems could be solved it seemed likely that it would be a long-term matter. Again, there was a more hopeful outlook for the Negro than the white families with regard to how long it would take to bring them to the point where they could function without special attention from the project staff.

Up to this point we have summarized the data on the number of problem families, the kinds of problems they have, whether they are receiving help with their problems, and the outlook for their future. The next few pages will bring together information on the characteristics of these problem families, such as their rent-paying practices, the types of family composition, their average length of residence in the projects, the extent of overcrowding, and related data.

### Rent-Paying Practices

Forty-three percent of the problem families were considered to be rent-paying problems by the management staff. Two-thirds of these rent-paying problem families were delinquent with their current rent. A far greater percentage of the white than of the Negro families were delinquent with their current rent.

An examination of the rent-paying practices for the preceding year shows that for the families that were rent problems over 10 percent had not paid their rent on time once during the entire year, and more than 40 percent of these families were delinquent in their rent nine or more times during the 12 months. The average number of delinquencies for these families during the year was 7.3. The balance of the problem families (those who were not considered to be rent problems) had an average of 1.3 late rent payments during the year.

### Types of Families

There are two groups of families that appear with significantly greater frequency among the problem families than in the project population generally. One is the white standard family and the other is the Negro broken family. Although white broken families also appear among the problem families in greater proportion than among all white tenants, the difference is not sufficient to be statistically significant. This indicates that although one-parent families loom large in the picture of problem families, especially among the Negroes, the fact that both parents are in the home by no means precludes that the family may be having serious difficulties, especially in the white group.

Because of the growing numbers of aged persons in the population, and the need for low-rent housing among this segment of the community, it is significant to learn from our data that old-age couples and families did not contribute a large proportion of problem families.

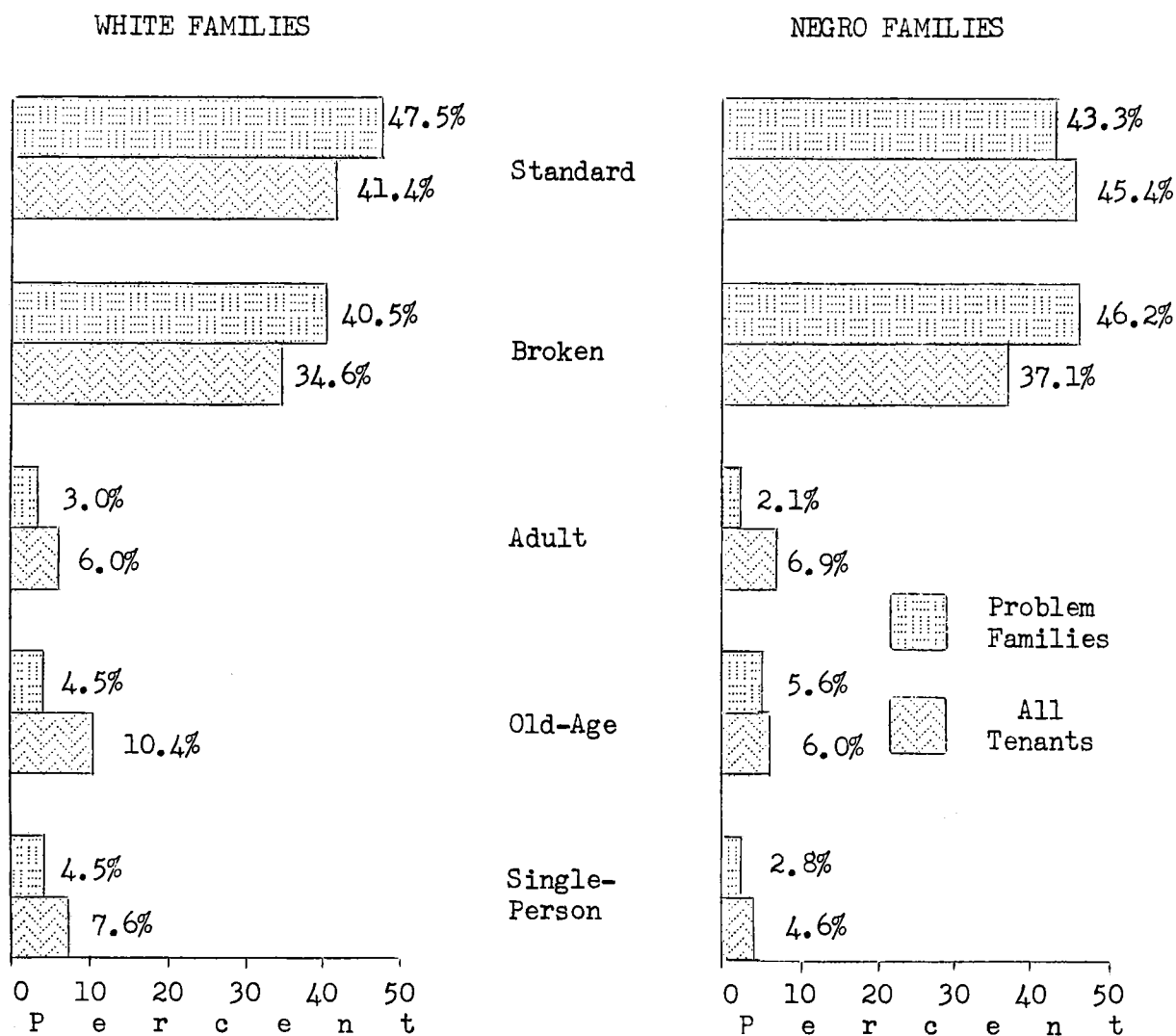
Adult families were also found with much less frequency among the problem families than in the total project population. In view of the present interest in providing low-rent housing for needy single-person families, it is interesting to note that a smaller proportion of single persons was found among the problem families than in the project population generally.

For all of these groups--the adult, old-age, and single-person families--the difference between their low proportion among the problem families as compared with the percentage they represented of all tenants was statistically significant.

### Family Stability

Family instability is both a cause and an effect of family problems. A question was asked about each of the problem families to learn whether there had been many changes in the family's composition since living in the project. About 12 percent of the problem families had many changes, 56 percent had a few changes, and one-third had no changes. Changes in family composition include removals from, or additions to, the family through such causes as death, desertion, incarceration, births, etc. In almost half of the instances where there had been many changes it was felt that these were related

PERCENT DISTRIBUTION OF TYPES OF FAMILIES,  
PROBLEM FAMILIES AND ALL TENANTS



to the families' problems. In over a third of the situations where there had been a few changes, it was felt there was a relationship between that fact and the family problems.

Length of Residence

The average length of residence in the projects where the white problem families lived was about the same as the average for the entire project.

In the Negro-occupied projects, there was greater variation between the average length of residence of the problem families and the total families in each project. In four of the seven projects being discussed, the problem families had longer average periods of residence than the average family in the project.



### Family Size

Problem families are very often large families. The number of children seems to exceed the ability of the parent or parents to deal with them. Over one-fourth contained seven or more persons, and 43 percent consisted of six or more persons. There was a higher percentage of very large families in the Negro group than in the white. Fifteen percent of the Negro problem families had nine or more persons, whereas only six percent of the white families were that large. The average problem family was 1.0 persons larger than the average size for all project families.

### Overcrowding

There was a high degree of overcrowding among the problem families. This factor was greater among the Negro problem families than in the white group. Seventeen percent of the white problem families lived in apartments that were too small for their families. This was true for 37 percent of the Negro problem families! The extent of overcrowding is, of course, related to the preponderance of large families just discussed above, and is measured by the high standards used in public housing.

Crowding among the problem families exceeds that for the project families as a whole. In every size dwelling unit, the average number of occupants among the problem families was in excess of the number for the project families as a whole.

### Service Status

There is a lower percentage of veterans' or servicemen's families among the problem families than in the project population generally. Thirty-five percent of the problem families had veteran or service status<sup>1/</sup>, compared with 45 percent of all low-rent families.

### The Typical Problem Family

In summing up, we can say that a typical problem family is a tenant who has lived in the project for some time; his problem is one of long standing; the family is likely to be large and to be without a father, or, especially among the white tenants, may well be a standard family with both parents in the home. More likely than not there is a record of rent delinquency and general financial difficulties. One would also be likely to find poor health and/or personal inadequacy resulting in a lack of desire or an inability to cope with life situations.

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<sup>1/</sup> Almost all of these were families of veterans.

## PROBLEM FAMILIES IN PUBLIC HOUSING AND IN THE COMMUNITY

The kinds of problems one finds among the project families are not unique to public housing. They correspond to the difficulties found among the low-income families throughout the community. The existence, the intensity, and the continuation of these problems is closely related to the resources and facilities available in the community for helping families deal with problems that are beyond their abilities to resolve alone. In addition, the projects must have staff members equipped to understand the needs of these families and the resources of the community, so they can be of maximum assistance in helping problem families work out solutions.

Many of the problems fall into areas where professionals concerned with social welfare are aware of lacks and are working to extend services. Therefore, although it offers no immediate solutions, a long-range view would indicate that it is vital for Housing Authority personnel to continue to take a prominent role in health and welfare planning in the community, and to work closely with agencies and organizations in the community working to improve social welfare services and standards.

There are no panaceas for intense social problems. A program to ameliorate and hopefully reduce to a minimum the difficult problems that families face must be evolved in a broad community framework. Much remains to be done in developing techniques and programs for working with families with complex problems.

The importance of community agencies working together is highlighted by the following recommendation from a study entitled "A Team Approach to Rehabilitating Recipients of Aid to Dependent Children":<sup>1/</sup>

"The experiment has demonstrated effectively that by pooling community skills and efforts great strides can be made in solving long-established and difficult community problems. Only in this way can the enormous costs of community services (costs often contributed to by solitary and duplicated efforts) be reduced and minimized. Intelligent interagency cooperation may accomplish what even expanded agency budgets sometimes fail to achieve--the promotion of increased and improved benefits for the citizens they serve."

It is interesting to note that whenever inquiry is made into the causes and cures for any specific social problem one emerges with the realization that the only realistic hope for widespread improvement lies in general community betterment rather than in any limited, specific approach to the particular problem. An example may be found in the following remarks concerning juvenile delinquency.

Bertram M. Beck, Director of the Special Juvenile Delinquency Project sponsored by the U. S. Children's Bureau, points out that "...efforts toward basic

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<sup>1/</sup> Ellarene L. MacCoy, M.D., and Harry I. Friedman, Social Security Bulletin, January 1955, p. 15.

prevention must be concerned with those social ~~problems~~<sup>programs</sup> designed to bolster family living. Among them are programs advancing economic well-being--the social security programs--and programs to provide decent housing. Measures designed to cope with the problem of chronic illness and physical disability as well as those aimed in a more positive sense at maintaining health are particularly important, since they help keep families together. Individualized social and psychological services for families should be strengthened. Discussion groups, with trained leaders, for expectant parents in which mutual problems may be explored and the body of knowledge about child development may be drawn upon are of vital importance."<sup>1/</sup>

The summary chapter of the United Nations report, "International Survey of Programmes of Social Development"<sup>2/</sup>, also discusses the importance of programs aimed at prevention.

"Social policies thus increasingly aim at anticipating need and preventing it from arising, through programs covering the population at large, not merely those already in need. In many types of recent social measures outside of social security, the over-riding purpose is to maintain an adequate family level of living and prevent individuals from falling into need..."

Problem families, especially those with a combination of problems, as most of the project problem families seem to be, are of concern not only in public housing but in communities generally. Community agencies are seeking ways of effectively working with these very difficult and complex family situations.

Important research in this area is currently going on. A five-year program is under way to learn more about the prevention and control of community-wide problems of people who are in need, chronically ill, disabled, or maladjusted. Three key experimental projects are being financed by \$550,000 appropriated by The Grant Foundation. Washington County, Maryland, is the location of a study on the prevention and reduction of indigent disability. A project focussed on the prevention and reduction of disordered behavior is taking place in San Mateo County, California, and a third study dealing with the prevention and control of dependency is being carried out in Winona County, Minnesota. The objectives of these studies are to develop techniques and procedures for early detection and rehabilitation; to develop methods for the effective utilization of available basic services; and to develop new methods of administration to be used in the prevention and reduction of these community problems.

If these objectives are realized, the results of these studies will provide invaluable knowledge to communities, and to agencies like the Housing Authority that are concerned with the health, welfare and adjustment of low-income families.

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<sup>1/</sup> Bertram M. Beck, "Curbing Juvenile Delinquency", Social Security Bulletin, June 1954, p. 10.

<sup>2/</sup> Bureau of Social Affairs, United Nations Secretariat, in cooperation with the International Labor Office, the Food and Agricultural Organization, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization and the World Health Organization, "Programs of Social Development: United Nations Survey", Social Security Bulletin, December 1955, p. 16.