

# 2003 Children's Report Card



WHO  
ARE OUR  
CHILDREN

## Mecklenburg County, North Carolina

Prepared by the Office of Planning and Evaluation  
for Health and Human Services in Mecklenburg County





## **Trends Related to Children and Families Fall 2003**

**Child-serving agencies across the spectrum of physical, emotional, educational, judicial, spiritual, and recreational programs use different outcomes and benchmarks to measure success for children in different situations. The Children's Report Card is a reference tool for the community to examine some of the different factors used to measure success. The Children's Report Card presents a snapshot of the combined impact these programs have had on the children and families in Mecklenburg County. By viewing a more global picture of children's successes and challenges, we can begin to formulate more community-wide, collaborative expectations and goals.**

**Some trends in the Report Card show that definite progress has been made in Mecklenburg County. Other trends are either neutral or show mixed results; while still others illustrate that some aspects of child and family life have not improved or continue to worsen. There are additional charts included that are informational only. Taken in combination, the data can assist in providing a direction for continued and renewed efforts.**

**All graphs depicted in this document include only Mecklenburg County data, unless otherwise noted. Additionally, percentages based upon total population may be different from previous years. This is because changes have been made to yearly population estimates for past years. Unless otherwise noted, all graphs show data on a calendar year basis.**

**The general public, along with its elected officials, community and neighborhood associations, business and faith-based organizations, nonprofits, and all former children are encouraged to consider the issues highlighted within the Report Card. It is critical to develop and evaluate our programs and services with the goal of improving the lives of children and families in Mecklenburg County.**

*Except where noted, the data in this report covers Mecklenburg County, (North Carolina), which includes the municipalities of Charlotte, Cornelius, Davidson, Huntersville, Matthews, Mint Hill, and Pineville.*



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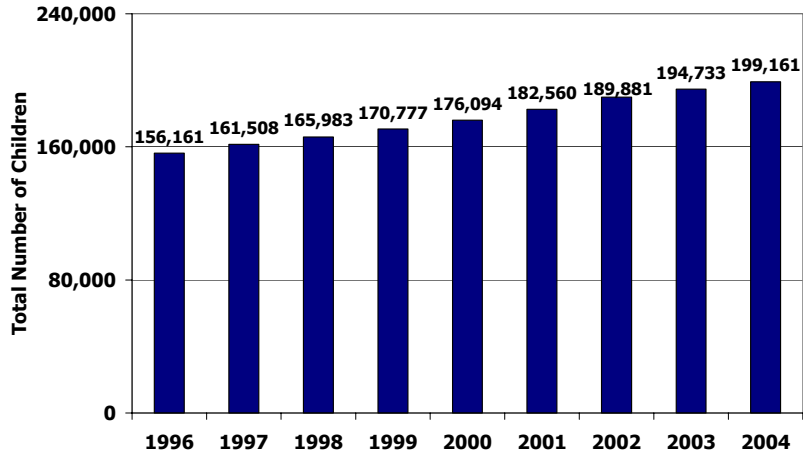
The 2003 Children's Report Card includes the latest data available as of Fall 2003. An electronic copy of the 2003 Children's Report Card in Adobe Acrobat (.PDF) format is available at <http://snurl.com/reportcard/>



# Demographics

The child population in Mecklenburg County has been growing by over 3% each year.

Total Number of Children Ages Birth through 17 Years Old

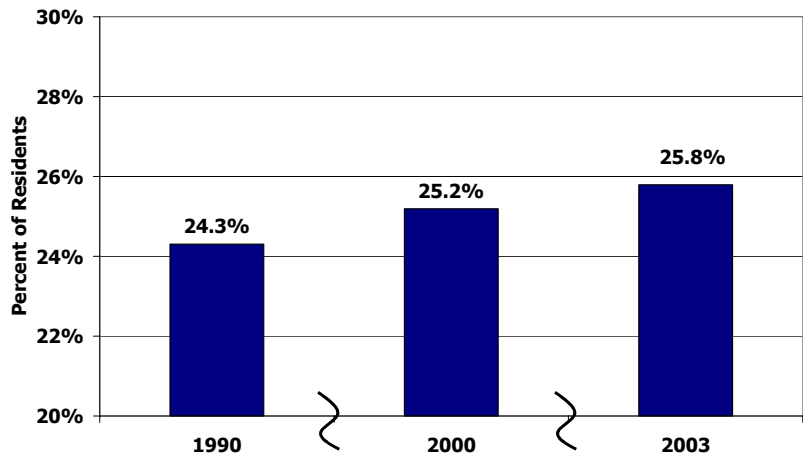


Source: State Demographics unit, NC Office of State Budget and Management; population in July of given year

*Most of the data in this document are reported as percentages or rates in order to provide a clear comparison across several years of time.*

The percent of the Mecklenburg County population under age 18 increased from the 1990 to the 2000 U.S. Census. The projection for 2003 indicates a further increase.

Percent of Residents Who Are Under Age 18



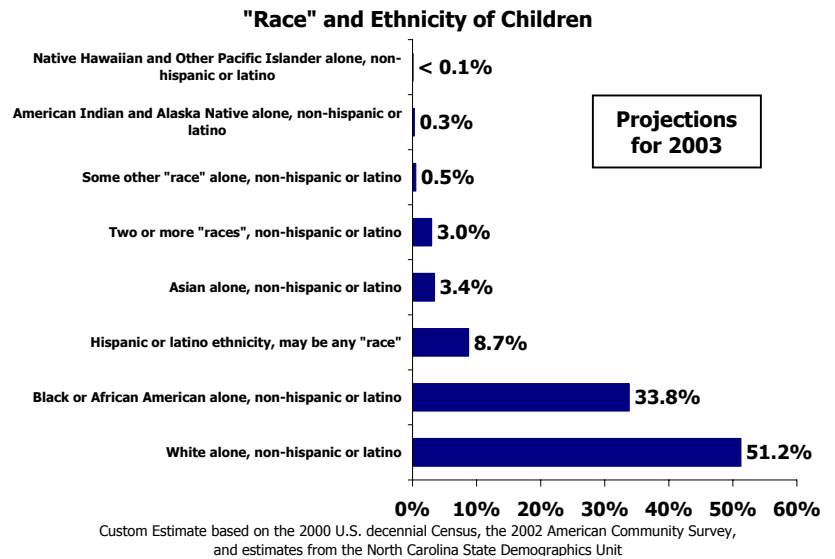
Source: Based on data provided by the State Demographics unit, NC Office of State Budget and Management





## Demographics

The 2000 Census was the first time that respondents could mark more than one "race" category; for this reason, "race" categories cannot be directly compared to the 1990 Census.



*The number of residents of Hispanic/Latino ethnicity in Mecklenburg County is currently growing by more than 12% each year.*

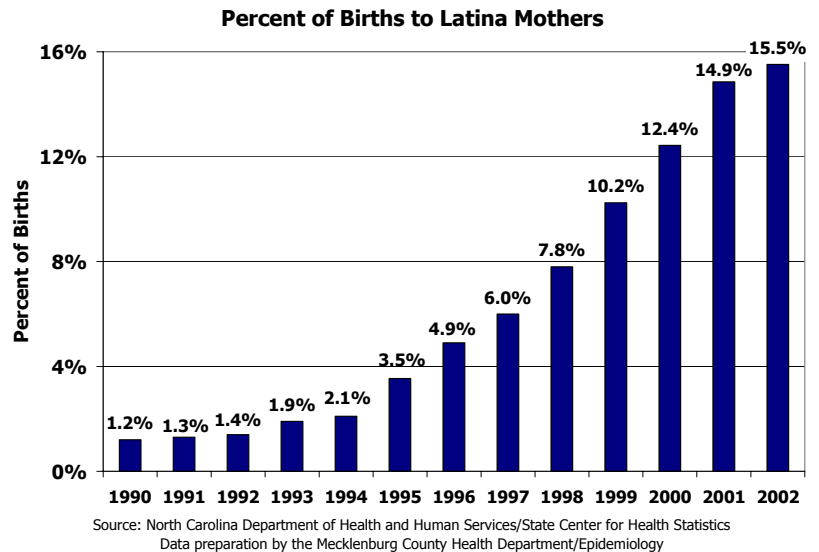
*In 1990, 1.3% of the total county population was Hispanic/Latino.*

*In 2000, 6.4% was Hispanic/Latino*

*By 2002, the official figure had risen to 8.1%.*

*Source: 2000 U.S. Census; 2002 American Community Survey*

The increase in births to Latina mothers is due to the increase in Latino citizens in Mecklenburg County. Birth data is collected based on the mother.

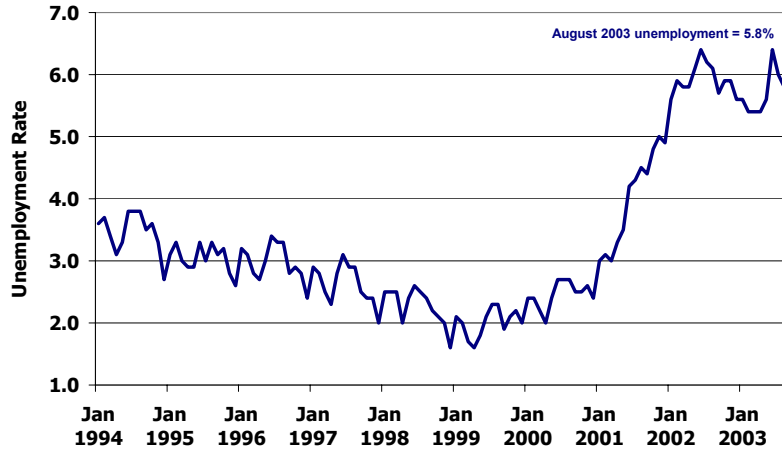




## Employment and Public Assistance

The dramatic rise in unemployment during 2001 stabilized somewhat in 2002 and 2003.

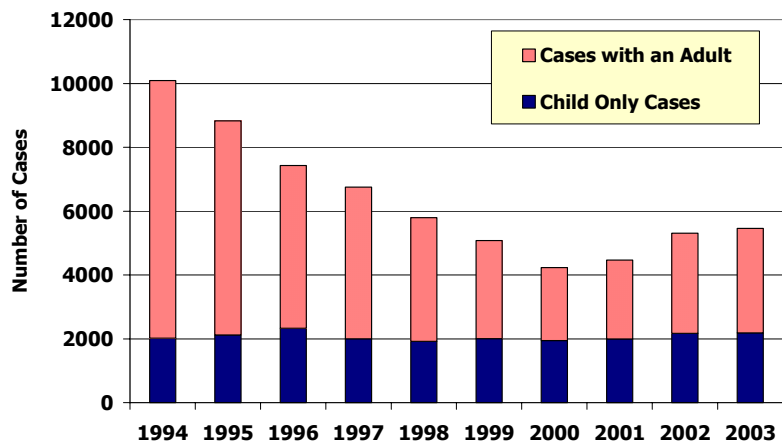
**Monthly Unemployment Rate in Mecklenburg County**  
January 1994 through August 2003



*Child-only Work First cases do not include any adults and are not subject to work and time limit requirements. An example of such a case would be a child residing with a grandparent.*

The increase in the number of Work First cases since 2000 has been primarily in cases including an adult.

**Work First Payment Cases**

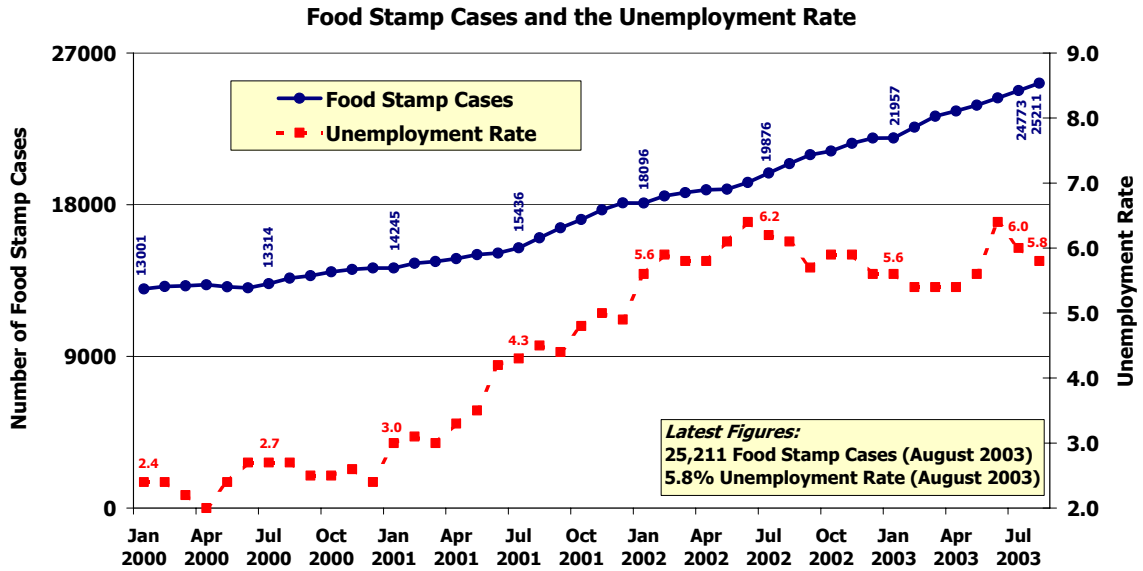


Source: North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services; case count in July of each year





## Effect of Unemployment on Food Stamps



Source: North Carolina Employment Security Commission; North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services

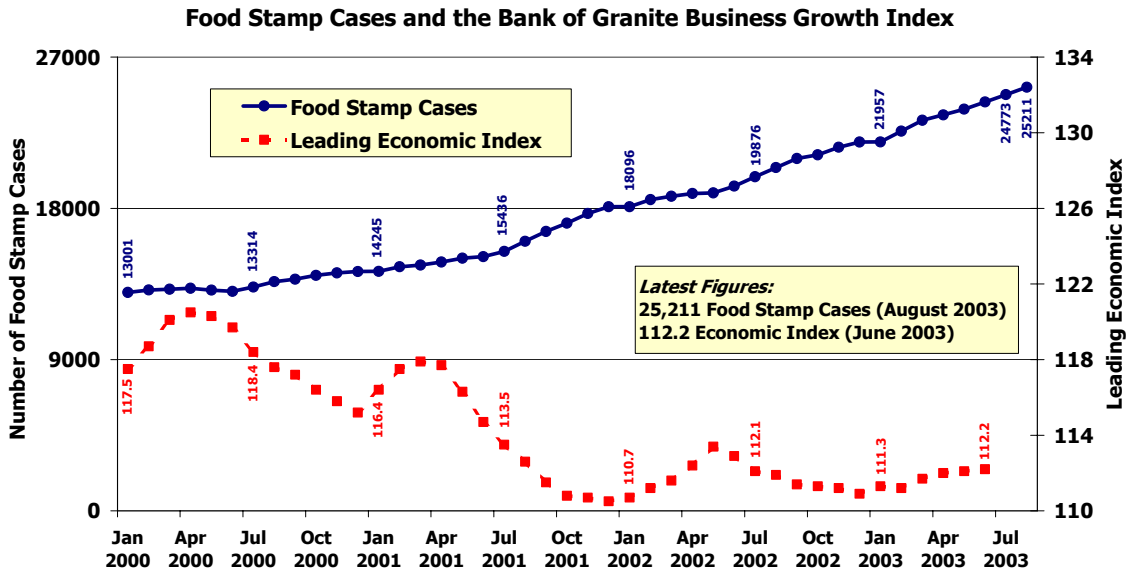
*Food Stamp regulations require that all persons in the household be included in the Food Stamp case.*

As the unemployment rate has risen in Mecklenburg County, so has the number of Food Stamp cases. Short-term changes in public assistance caseloads are a reflection of current and short-term strength or weakness in the local job market.

*A family is eligible for food stamps at 130% of poverty level. The 2003 Health and Human Services Poverty Guidelines establish poverty for a family of three at \$15,260 annual income (excluding cash assistance, food stamps, subsidized child care, and housing assistance). See page 22 for additional information.*



### Effect of the Economy on Food Stamps



Source: Dr. Harrison Campbell and the Charlotte Chamber of Commerce; North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services

As the local economy has declined (as measured by the Bank of Granite Business Growth Index), the number of Food Stamp cases has risen. Persons who are more economically vulnerable are less likely to qualify for substantial unemployment benefits and more likely to supplement their income with aid from one or more public assistance programs.

*Supported by the Charlotte Chamber of Commerce and developed by Harrison Campbell of the UNC-Charlotte Department of Geography and Earth Sciences, the Bank of Granite Business Growth Index serves as an economic barometer for the Charlotte area. Using seasonally adjusted local data, it is designed to provide analysts and decision makers in the private and public sectors with timely information about the current and short-term health of the Charlotte-Mecklenburg economy.*

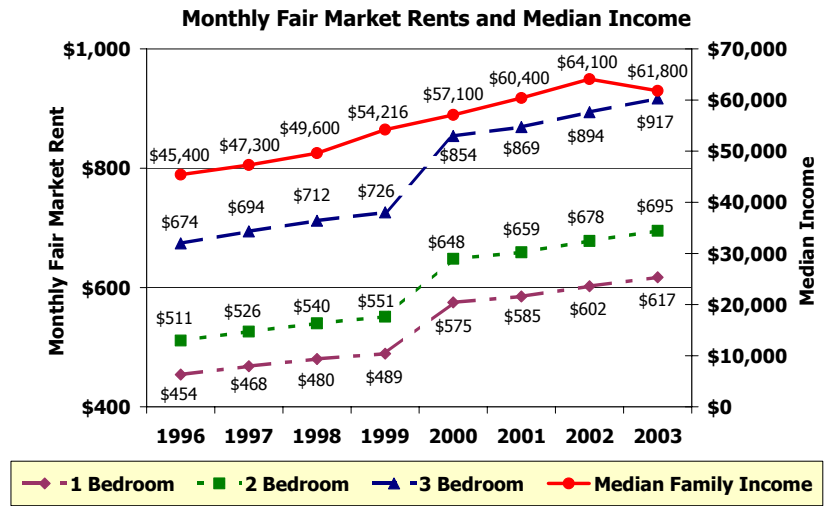




## Housing Costs



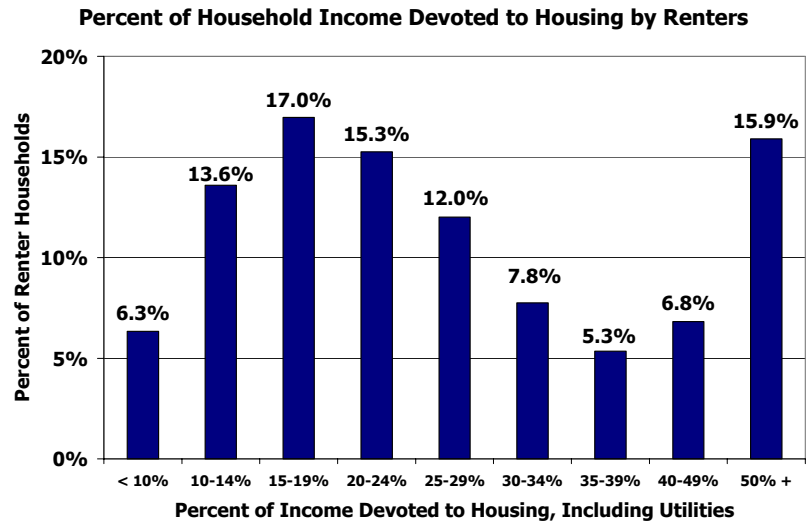
Median income is the mid-point of the income of all families in Mecklenburg County, with one-half of families having higher incomes and one-half of families having lower incomes.



Source: U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development

*Fair Market Rent is the gross rent estimate below which 40% of standard quality privately owned rental housing units can be obtained; this includes rent and the cost of utilities, except telephone. Rental units less than two years old are excluded. The U.S. Housing and Urban Development recommends that monthly housing expenses be no greater than 30% of gross income. To afford a two bedroom apartment, a total hourly wage of \$13.47 per hour for full time work is needed.*

The total income of the renters in the graph to the right is not available, so we cannot be certain how many are lower income households which are more adversely affected by their relatively high housing costs.



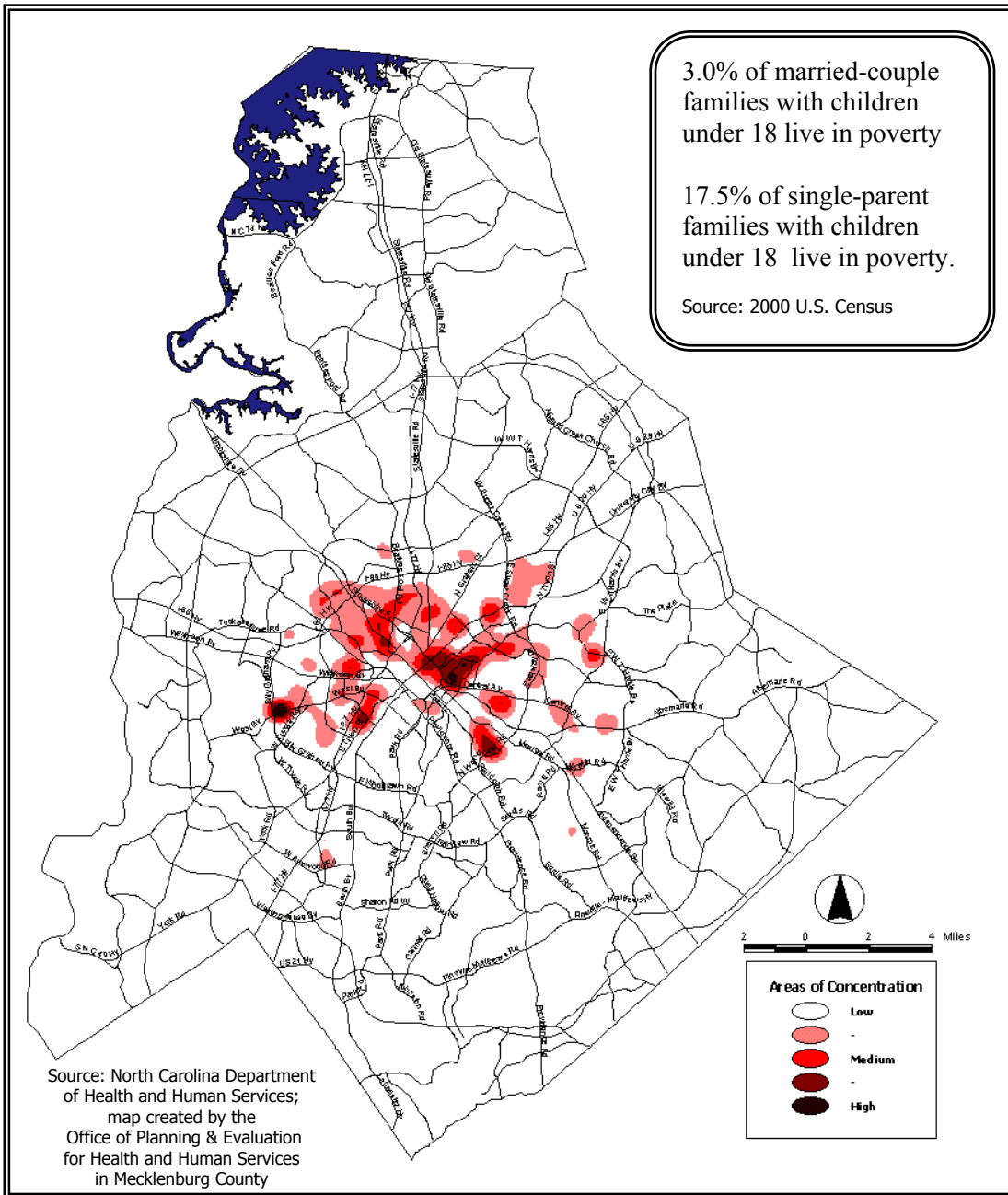
Source: U.S. Census Bureau - 2000 U.S. Decennial Census

*Safe, stable housing can have a significant impact on a child's school performance and self-esteem.*





### Concentrations of Poverty

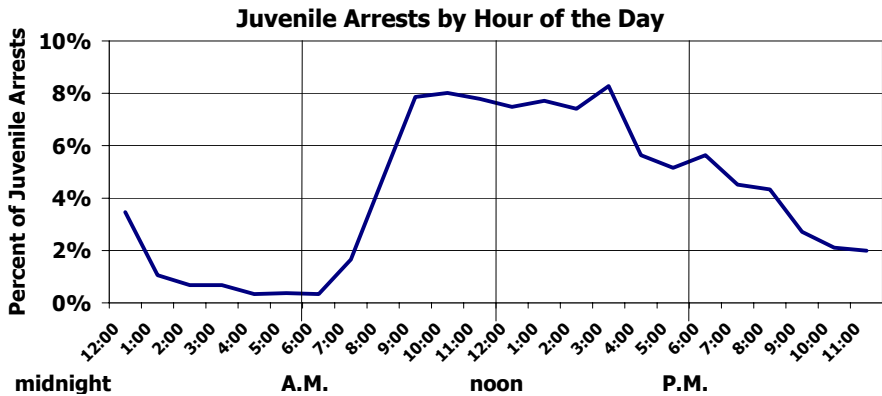
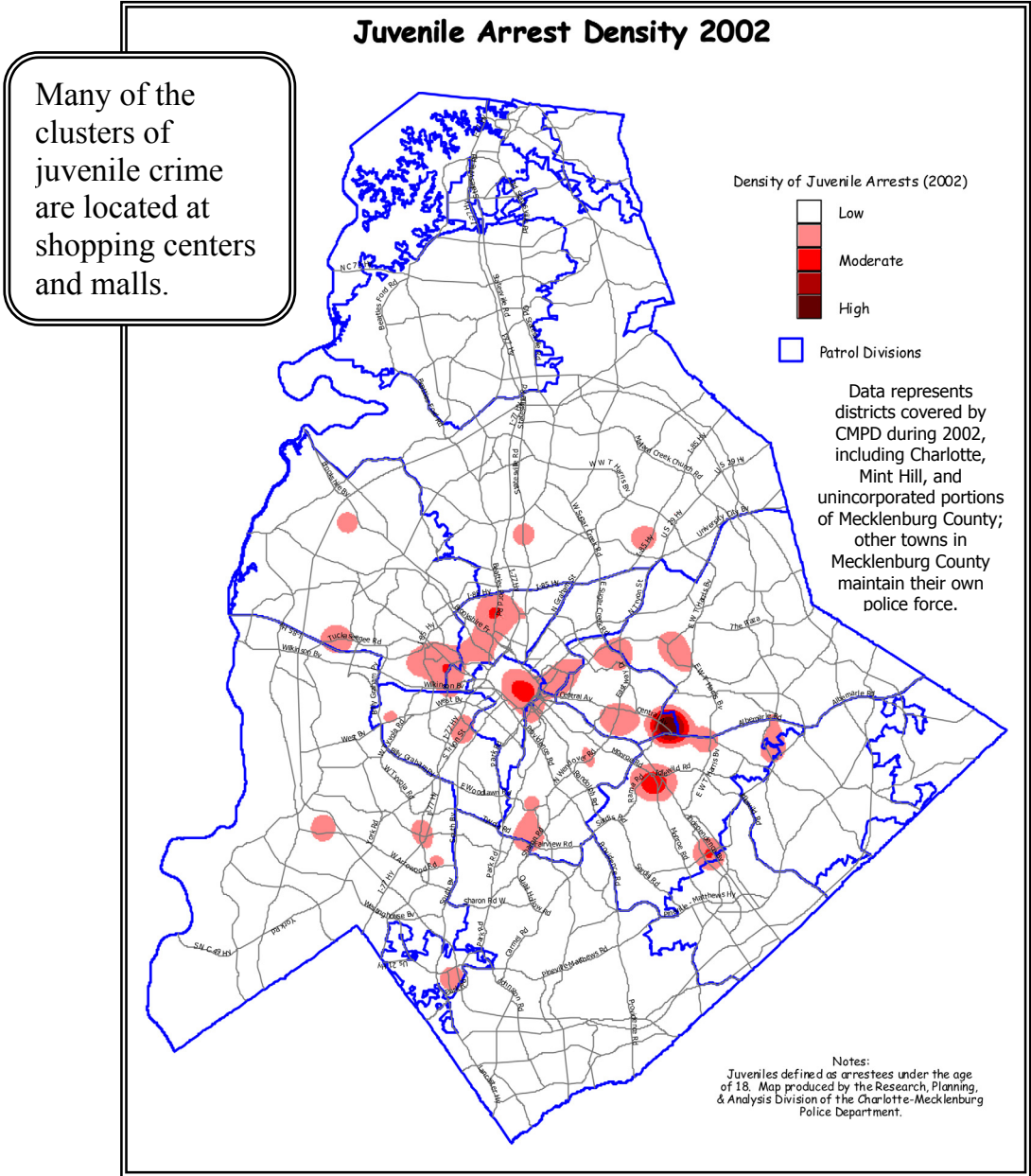


*The poverty concentrations in the map are based upon food stamp recipient concentrations. There are recipients who reside in other parts of the County, but these are the areas of greatest concentration.*

*The United States Census Bureau estimates that about 64,000 residents in Mecklenburg County live in families with incomes below the Federal Poverty Thresholds. This is about 9% of the population of the county. (Source: 2002 American Community Survey)*



# Concentrations of Juvenile Crime

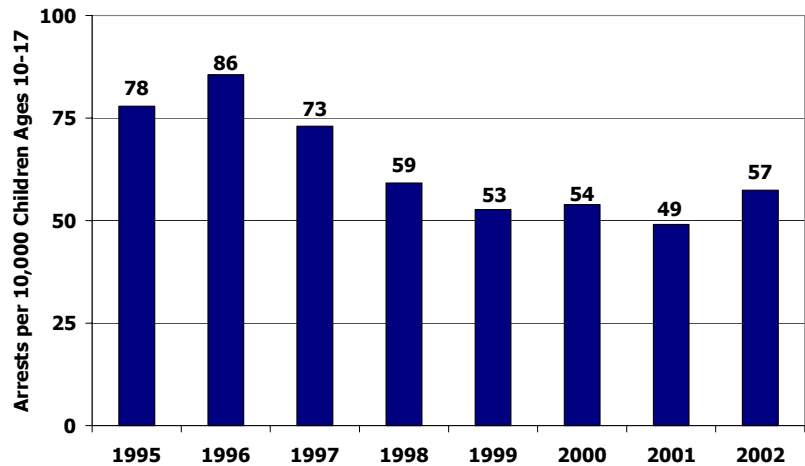




## Juvenile Crime

Violent crimes are defined as murder, non-negligent manslaughter, forcible rape, robbery, and aggravated assault.

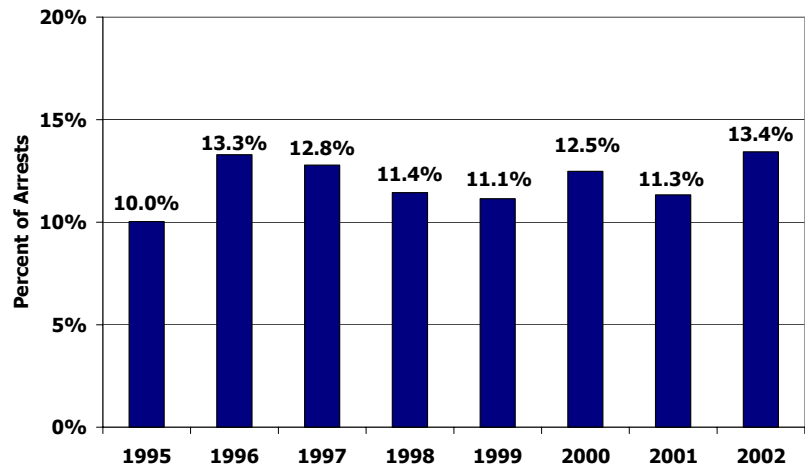
Juvenile Arrest Rate for Violent Crimes per 10,000 persons ages 10 to 17



Source: North Carolina Department of Justice

*The Mecklenburg County Sheriff's Office operates the RISE (Re-education, Intervention, and Skills Enhancement) program for juvenile offenders. The RISE program primarily services 12-18 year old juvenile offenders and uses a day reporting and treatment center format. The program's goals are to reduce juvenile recidivism in Mecklenburg*

Juvenile Share of Total Violent Crime Arrests



Source: North Carolina Department of Justice

In the year 2002, 13.4% of arrests for violent crimes were of juveniles.

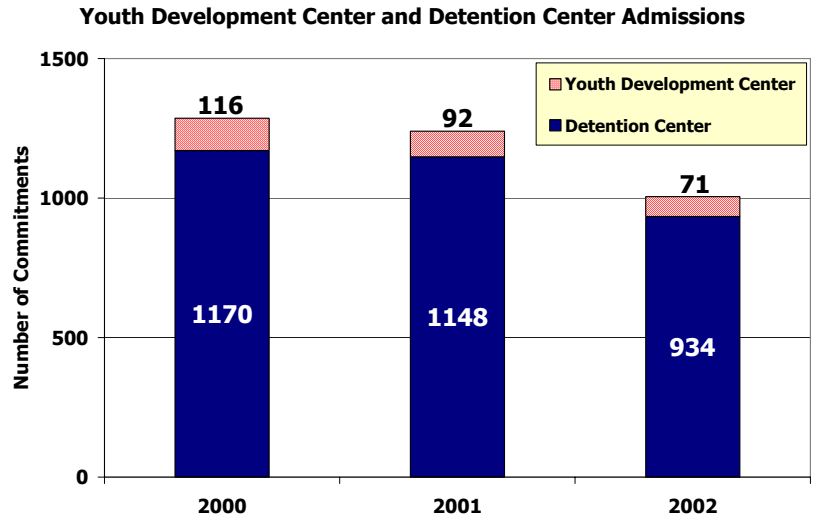
There were 474 juveniles arrested for violent crimes in 2002.



## Juvenile Crime



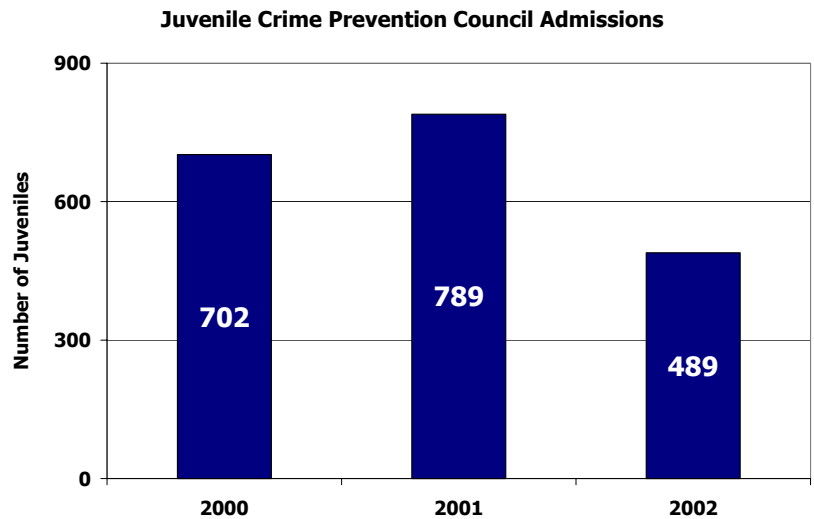
There are 5 Youth Development Centers (YDC) operated by the state. These are long-term residential facilities that tend to receive juveniles who have been involved in more serious crimes.



Source: North Carolina Department of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention; calendar years are represented

*There are fourteen Detention Centers in North Carolina, some operated by the state and some by counties. Detention Centers are residential but the average length of stay is much less than that of YDCs. Like YDCs, detention centers provide medical, mental health, educational, and other support services to the youth under their care and supervision.*

Juvenile Crime Prevention Councils are local bodies that work in partnership with other agencies to provide delinquency and substance abuse alternatives.



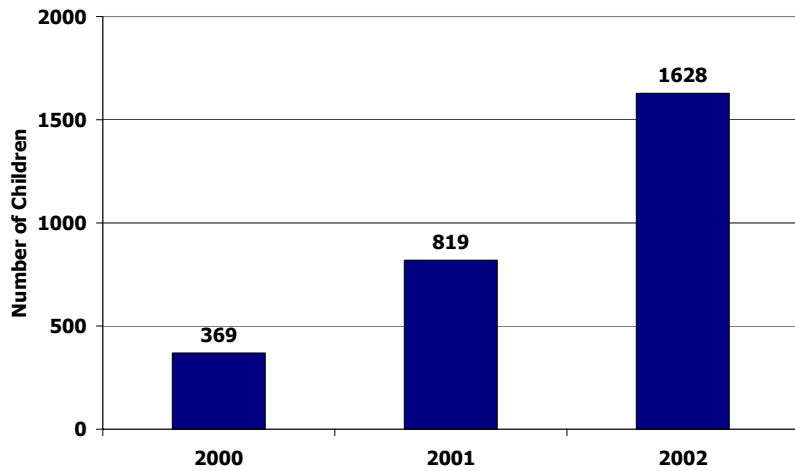
Source: North Carolina Department of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention; calendar years are represented



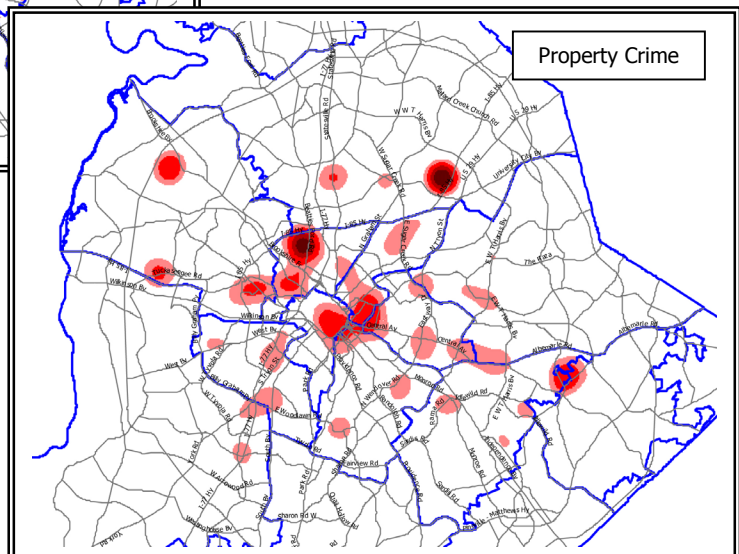
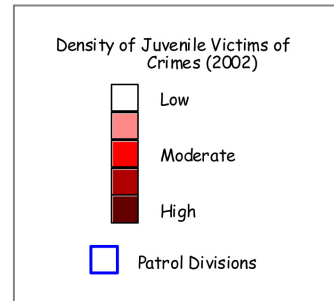
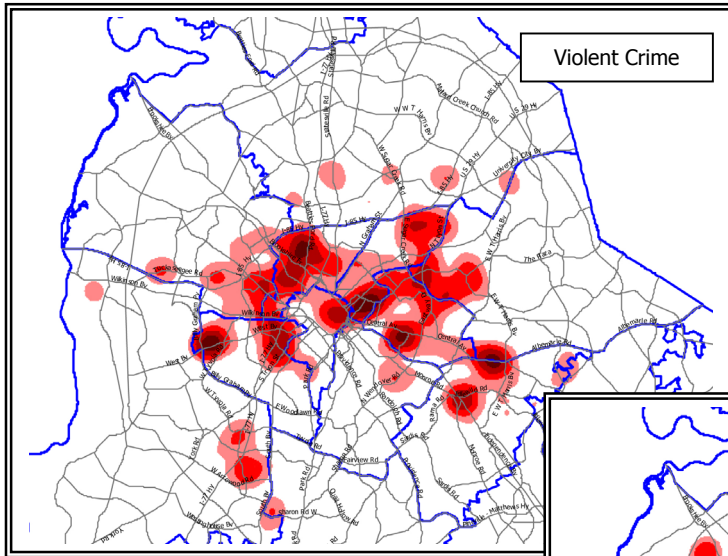
## Juvenile Victims of Crime

CD-CP Partners is a program that serves children who are victims or witnesses of violence and/or at risk of abuse and neglect. The dramatic rise in the number of children in this program is mostly due to program expansion.

Children Referred to Child Development-Community Policing Partners



Source: Area Mental Health Authority



Map produced by the Research, Planning & Analysis Division of the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Department.

Data represents Charlotte, Mint Hill, and unincorporated portions of Mecklenburg County.

Juveniles defined as victims are under the age of 18. Only primary victims included in analysis where multiple victims were listed.

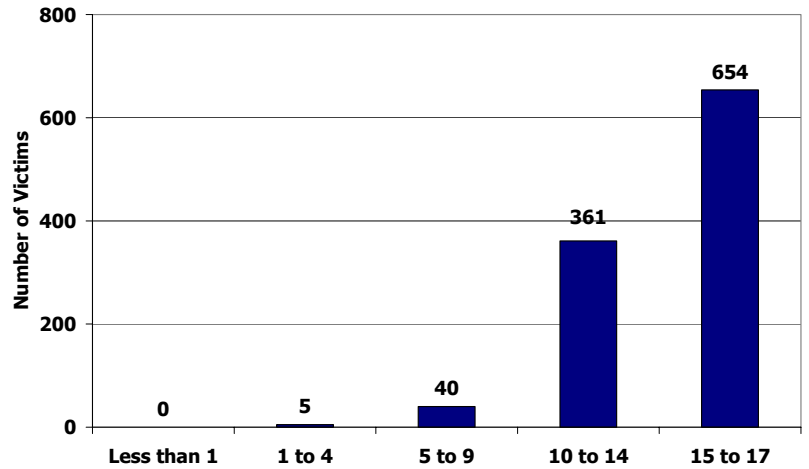




## Juvenile Victims of Crime

Violent crime victimization increases with the age of the child.

Number of Primary Victims Under Age 18 by Age in 2002

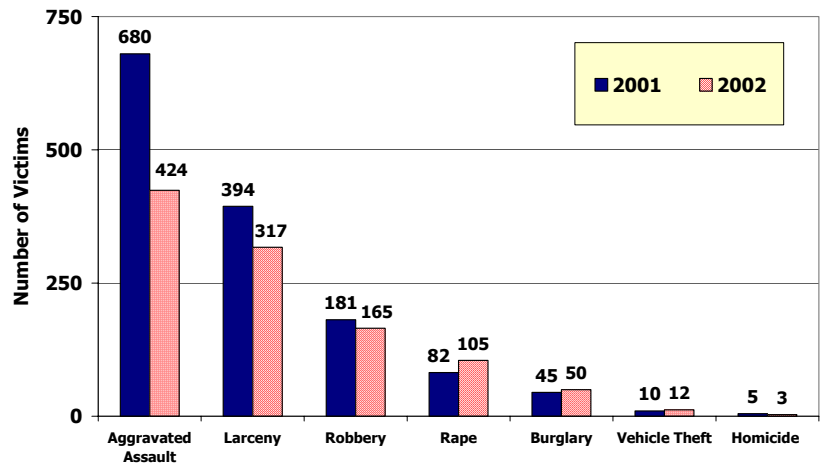


Source: Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Dept.; data represents Charlotte and unincorporated areas of Mecklenburg County

*The numbers on this page are estimates based on Uniform Crime Reporting offense classifications and counting procedures. In the case of incidents that involve multiple offenses, the incident is classified using the "highest" crime involved. In the case of multiple victims, if a child was only a victim of a "lower" crime in an incident, the child is not counted in these figures.*

From 2001 to 2002 rape, burglary, and vehicle thefts against juveniles increased. Assault, larceny, robbery and homicide decreased.

Number of Primary Victims Under Age 18 by Offense



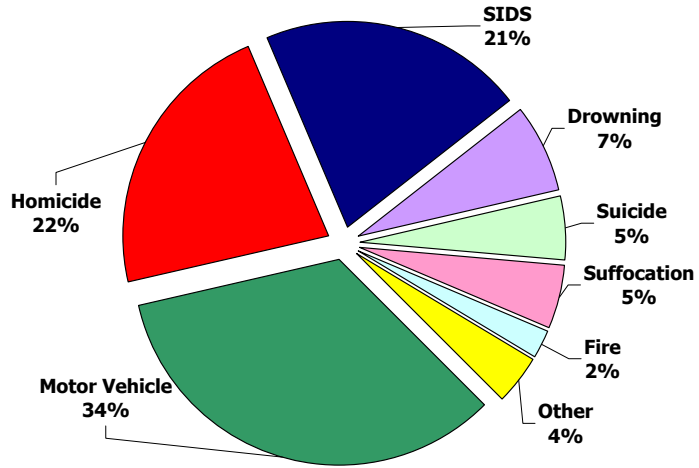
Source: Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Dept.; data represents Charlotte and unincorporated areas of Mecklenburg County



## Injuries and Fatalities

Motor Vehicle accidents are the leading cause of preventable childhood deaths in Mecklenburg County. This includes children as drivers, passengers, and pedestrians.

**Preventable Childhood Deaths for Children Under 18 Years Old**

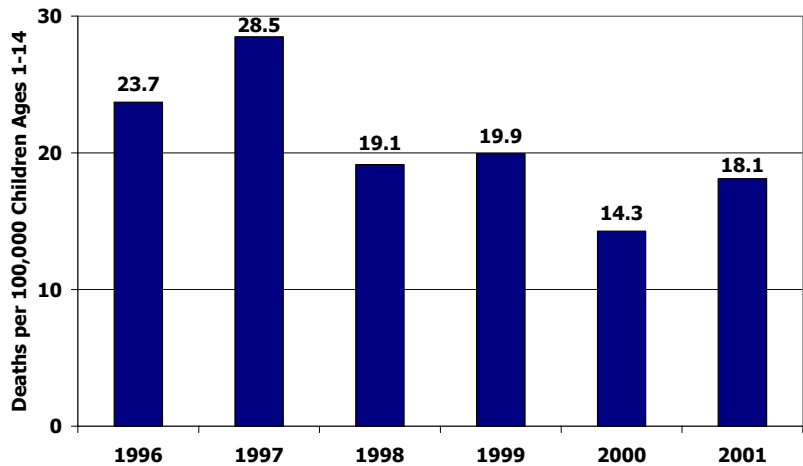


Source: Child Fatality Prevention and Protection Team

*There were 188 preventable childhood deaths from 1995 to 2000 in Mecklenburg County.*

*Source: Mecklenburg County Community Child Fatality Prevention and Protection Team*

**Mortality Rate per 100,000 Children Ages 1 through 14 Years Old**



Source: North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services, State Center for Health Statistics

Over a period of several years there has been a reduction in the mortality rate of children ages 1 through 14.

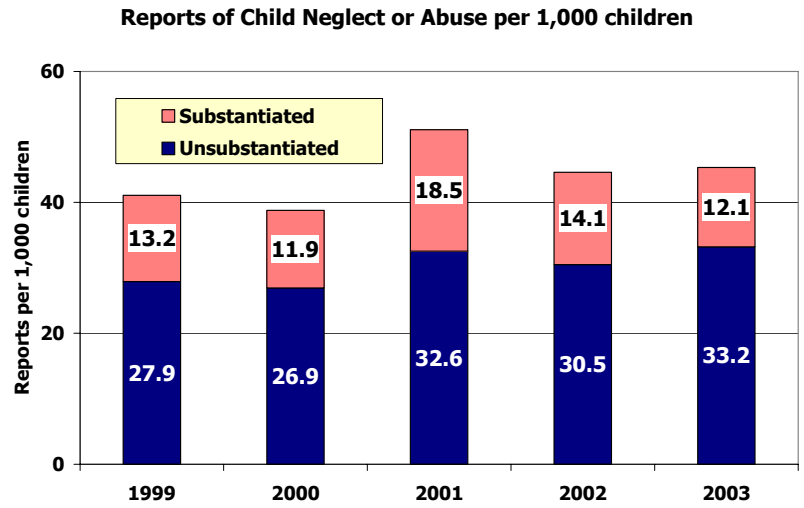






## Neglect and Abuse; Adoption and Foster Care

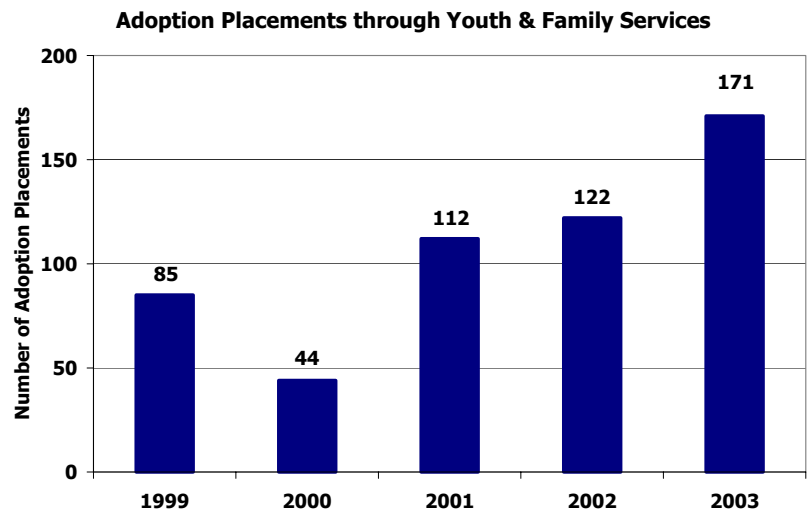
The number of child neglect and abuse reports and the rates of substantiation vary from year to year but have not been following a clear upward or downward trend.



Source: North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services; years are July-to-June fiscal years

*The majority of substantiated reports made to Child Protective Services in Mecklenburg County are for child neglect. Abuse is involved in just over 7% of substantiated cases.*

Fiscal year 2003 saw a record number of adoptions in Mecklenburg County. These figures do not include private adoptions.



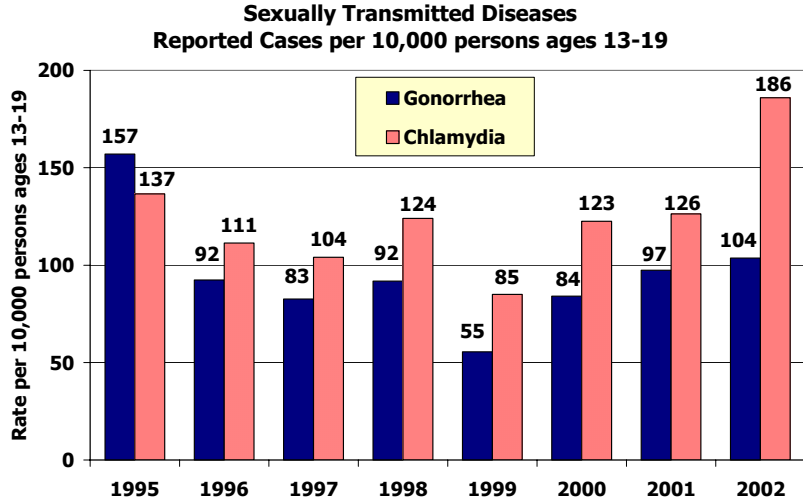
Source: Mecklenburg County Department of Social Services; years are July-to-June fiscal years

*Even with a rising child population, the number of children in legal custody of the Mecklenburg County Department of Social Services has remained between 1,300 and 1,400 during each of the last four years due to shorter stays in custody.*



**STDs**

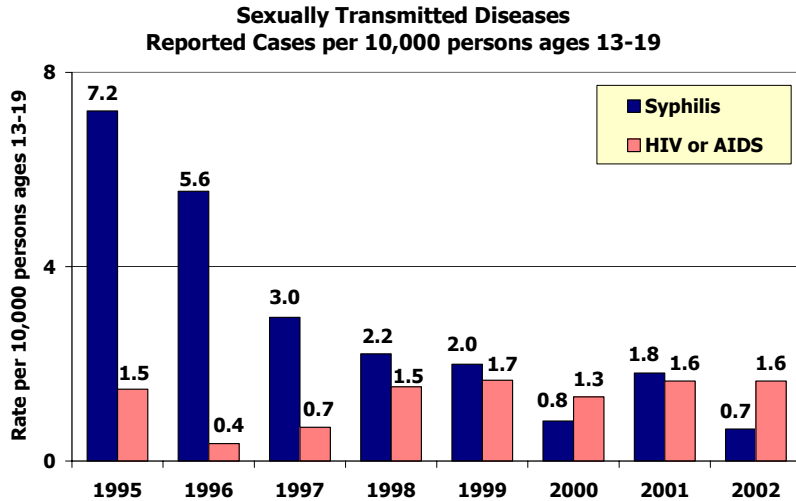
Patients are more likely to seek treatment for gonorrhea, while they may have chlamydia and have no symptoms.



Source: North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services/State Center for Health Statistics  
Data preparation by the Mecklenburg County Health Department/Epidemiology

*Among teens in 2002, there were 629 reported cases of Gonorrhea, 1,129 reported cases of Chlamydia, 4 cases of Syphilis, and 10 cases of HIV or AIDS. Health professionals are unsure of the reasons for the dip in Gonorrhea and Chlamydia which occurred in 1999.*

Since 1995, there has been a dramatic decline in the rate of Syphilis infection in teens.



Source: North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services/State Center for Health Statistics  
Data preparation by the Mecklenburg County Health Department/Epidemiology



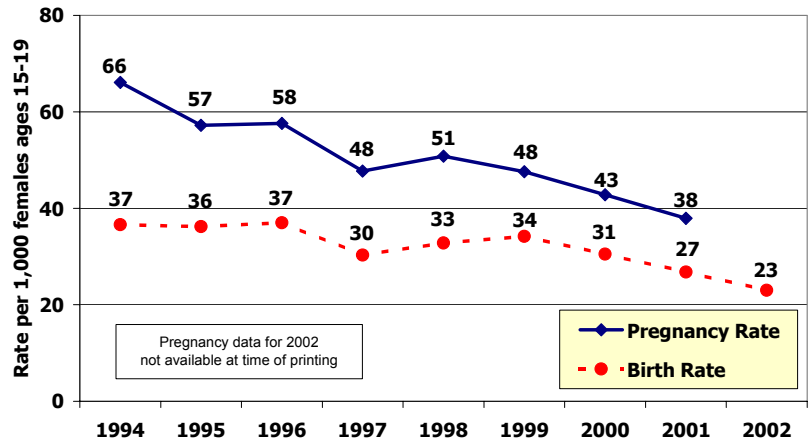


## Teen Pregnancy

The pregnancy rate and birth rate for teens has declined.

In 2002, there were 360 births to girls ages 15-17.

**Pregnancy and Birth Rates per 1,000 females ages 15-17**

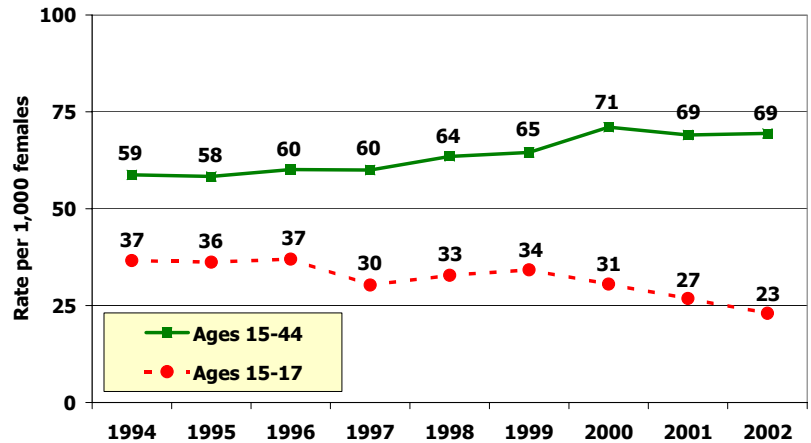


Source: North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services/State Center for Health Statistics  
Data preparation by the Mecklenburg County Health Department/Epidemiology

*Data is collected based upon patient residence, not on location of health services provided.*

*The national standard for fertility comparisons is females 15 years to 44 years of age.*

**Birth Rates per 1,000 females ages 15-17 compared to 1,000 females ages 15-44**



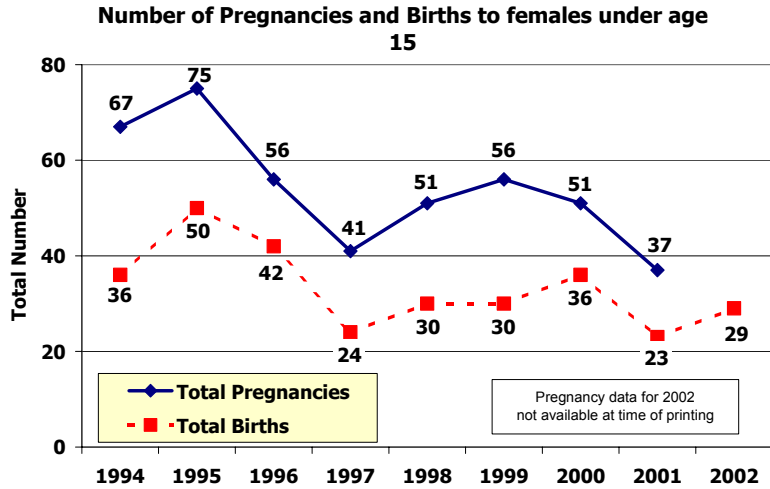
Source: North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services/State Center for Health Statistics  
Data preparation by the Mecklenburg County Health Department/Epidemiology

The recent rise in the overall birth rate has leveled off while the teen birth rate has continued to decline.



## Pregnancy and Birth Rates

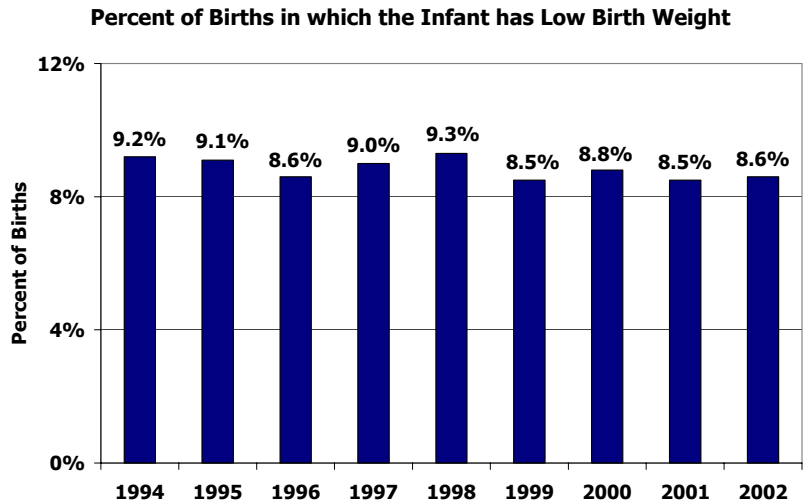
Since 1999 the total pregnancies, births, and the gap between the pregnancies and births all declined for females under age 15.



Source: North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services/State Center for Health Statistics  
Data preparation by the Mecklenburg County Health Department/Epidemiology

*Babies born at 2500 grams or less, about 5 ½ pounds, are considered low birth weight.*

Premature births, mother nutrition, mother medical condition, and illicit drug use each contribute to low weight births.



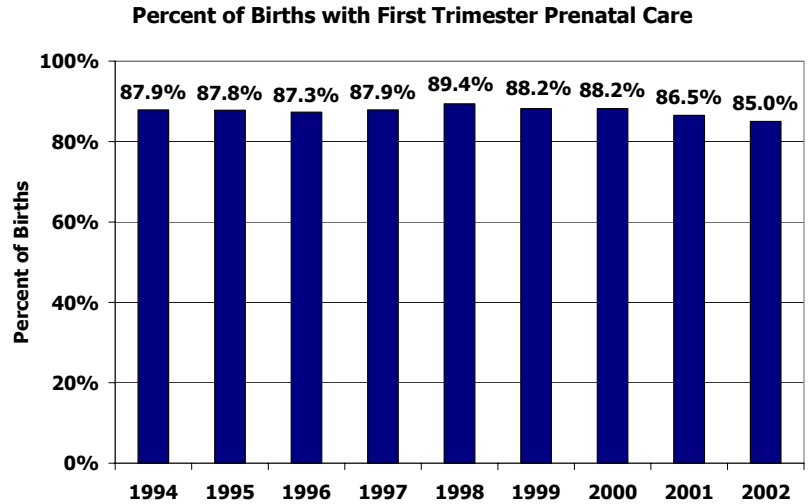
Source: North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services/State Center for Health Statistics  
Data preparation by the Mecklenburg County Health Department/Epidemiology





## Prenatal Care and Infant Mortality

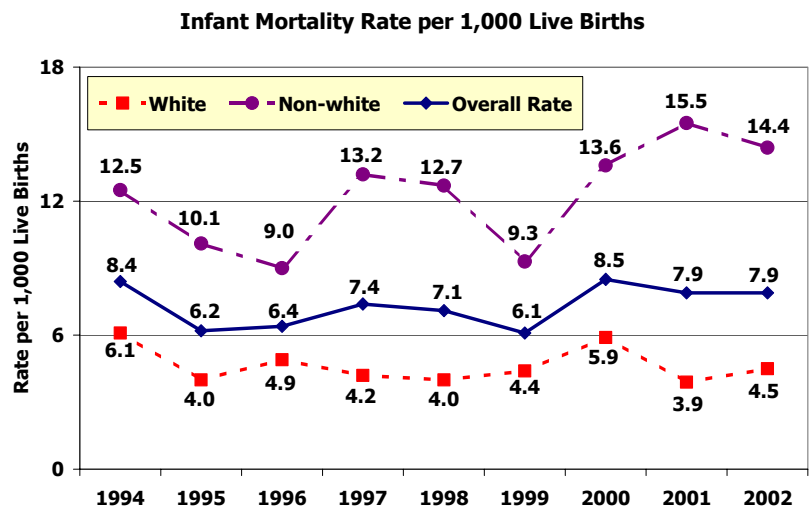
In recent years there has been a decline in the overall percent of women receiving care during the first trimester of pregnancy.



Source: North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services/State Center for Health Statistics  
Data preparation by the Mecklenburg County Health Department/Epidemiology

*While some mothers choose not to receive first trimester prenatal care, other mothers (particularly immigrants) do not have quick access to prenatal care and some do not consider first trimester prenatal care important.*

Latino or Hispanic residents tend to be categorized as “white”. Latino/Hispanic women generally have very good birth outcomes – in Mecklenburg County they tend to be relatively young and healthy.

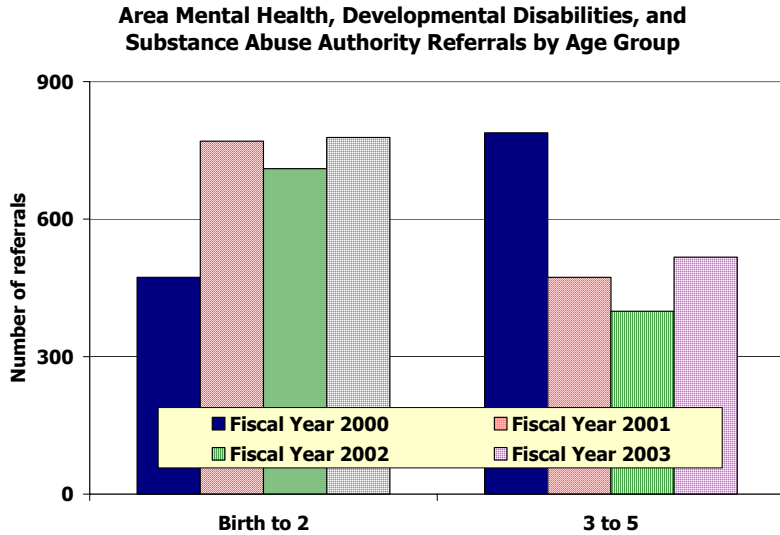


Source: North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services/State Center for Health Statistics  
Data preparation by the Mecklenburg County Health Department/Epidemiology



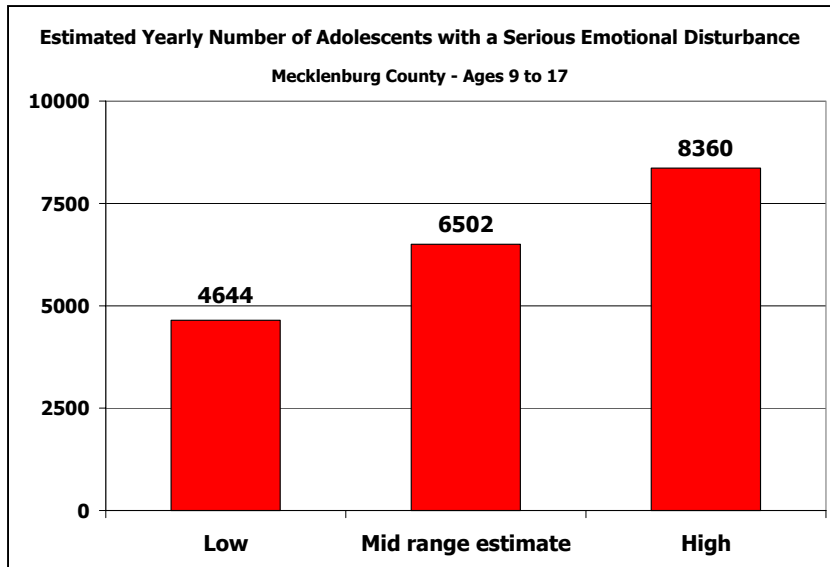
# Mental Health

Area Mental Health strives for early identification. Early intervention leads to better treatment outcomes.



*Referrals of children ages 3-5 have decreased due to participation by Charlotte-Mecklenburg School system in evaluation, particularly of speech/language development.*

The national yearly incidence of serious emotional disturbance among adolescents ages 9 to 17 years old is between 5% and 9%.

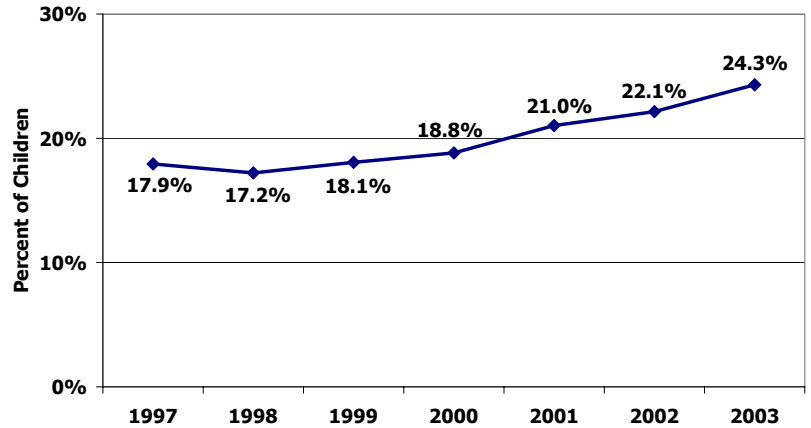


Medicaid



The percent of children in Mecklenburg County who are receiving government funded health care has been increasing.

Percent of Children Receiving Medicaid or NC Health Choice

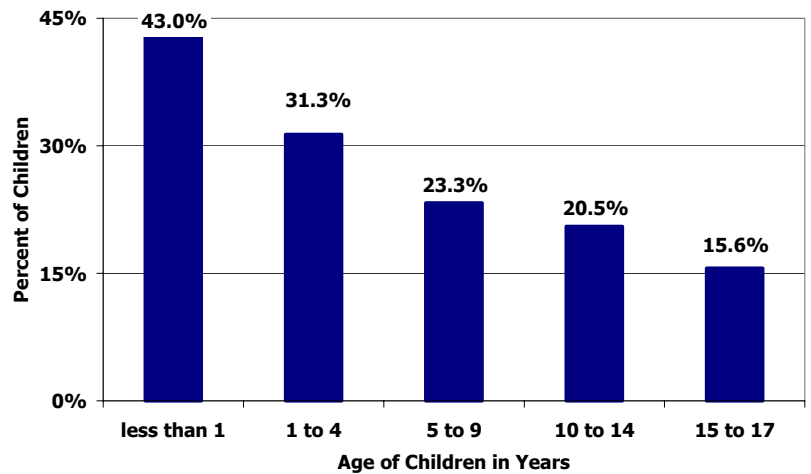


Source: North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services; July of each year

*Eligibility is determined by family income as a percent of the Health & Human Services Poverty Guidelines. Children under age 1 can have family incomes up to 185% of the poverty limit, children 1-5 up to 133%, and older children up to 100%. Children in families earning up to 200% can receive NC Health Choice, but the family must pay part of the premium.*

The percent of children receiving Medicaid varies by age, largely because the income limits vary by age.

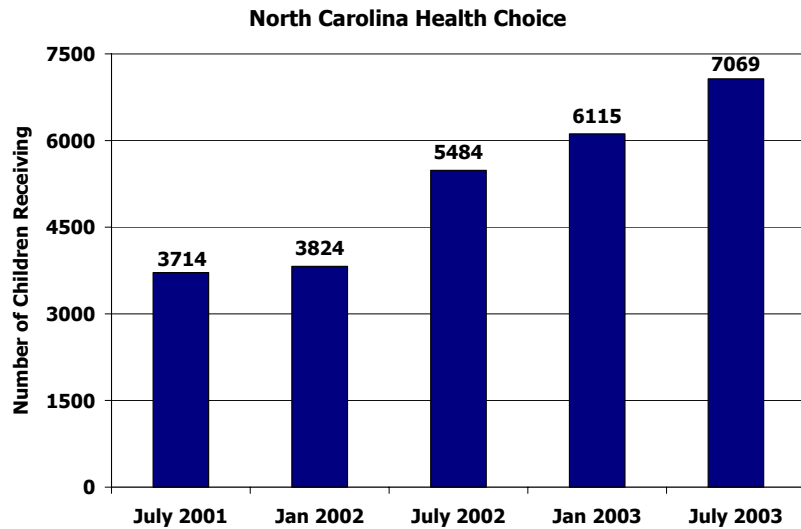
Percent of Children Receiving Medicaid by Age Group



Source: North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services; NC State Demographics Unit; as of July 2003



Enrollment in NC Health Choice has increased as the enrollment cap has increased, and paralleling the increase in Medicaid enrollment.



*NC Health Choice is government subsidized, but is not an unlimited entitlement program. Enrollment is capped based on allocated funding.*

**2003 Health and Human Services Poverty Guidelines**

Size of Family	48 Contiguous States and D.C.	Alaska	Hawaii
1	\$ 8,980	\$11,210	\$10,330
2	12,120	15,140	13,940
3	15,260	19,070	17,550
4	18,400	23,000	21,160
5	21,540	26,930	24,770
6	24,680	30,860	28,380
7	27,820	34,790	31,990
8	30,960	38,720	35,600
For each additional person, add	3,140	3,930	3,610

Annual gross income is listed above; does not include the value of food stamps, child care, or housing public assistance.

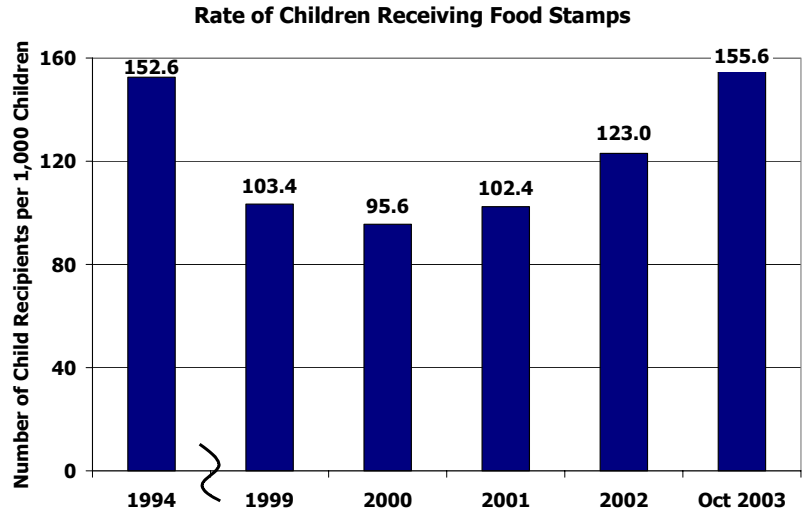
SOURCE: *Federal Register*, Vol. 68, No. 26, February 7, 2003, pp. 6456-6458.



Nutrition



As the unemployment rate has increased, so has the number of children receiving Food Stamps. The household gross income limit to receive Food Stamps is 130% of federal poverty.

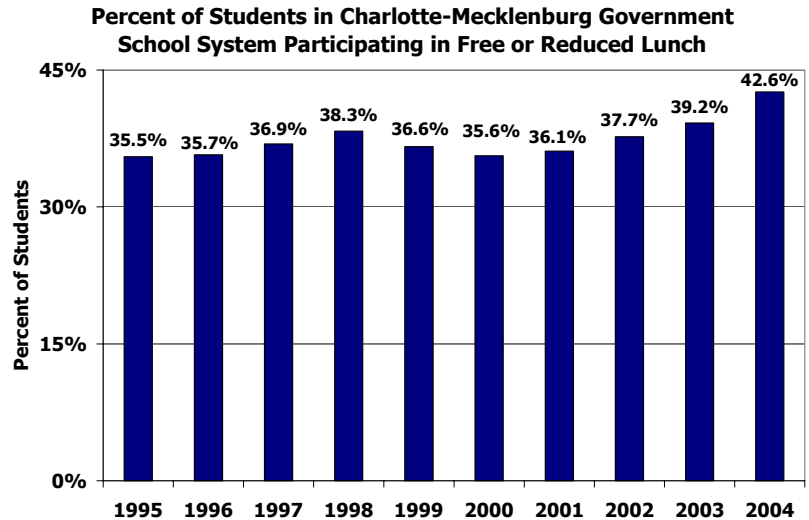


Source: North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services; rate in July of each year except for Oct 2003

*The number of Food Stamp cases, Food Stamp recipients, and children receiving Food Stamps is at a record high in Mecklenburg County.*

*After years of relative stability, the rate of students receiving free or reduced price lunch has jumped.*

The household income limit to receive free lunch is 130% of federal poverty; the limit for reduced price lunch is 185% of federal poverty.



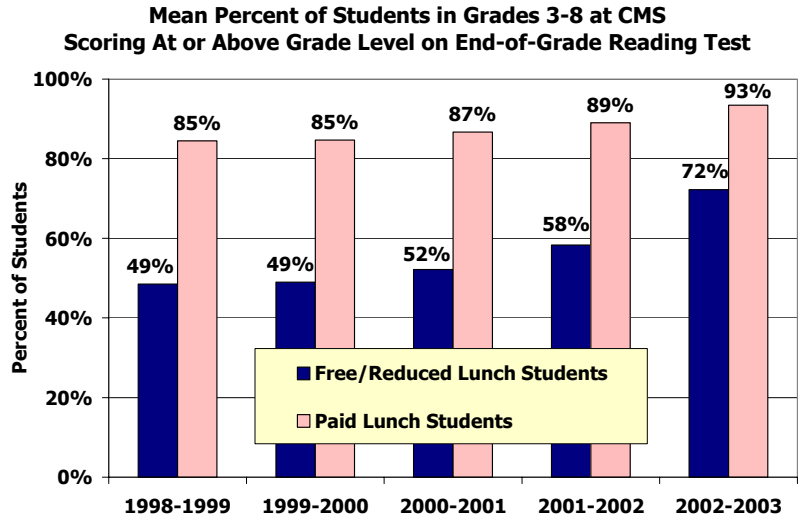
Source: Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools; percentage as of the 20th day of school in autumn of the given year

Caution must be used when making comparisons to other school districts. About 15% of school age children in Mecklenburg County attend a private or home school, the second highest rate in North Carolina (second to Wake County).



# Education

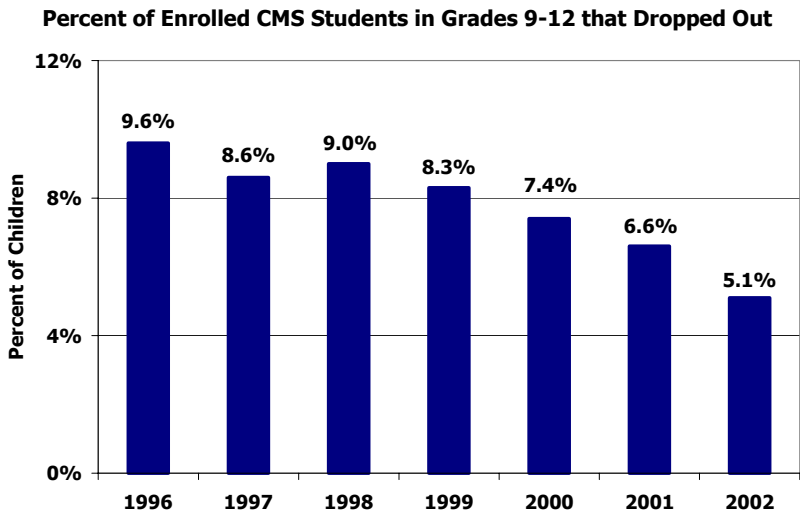
There is a significant achievement gap between children in low income families and other students, but the gap has been narrowing.



Source: Charlotte Mecklenburg Government Schools

*The status of CMS students in the ninth grade during the 1998-1999 school year was compared to the August 2002 enrollment. It was found that 54% had graduated, 3% were still in school, 16% had transferred out of CMS, and 27% had dropped out.*

The yearly CMS dropout rate has been declining in recent years, but still remains large.



Source: Charlotte-Mecklenburg Government School System; year is the school year, ending in May of given year

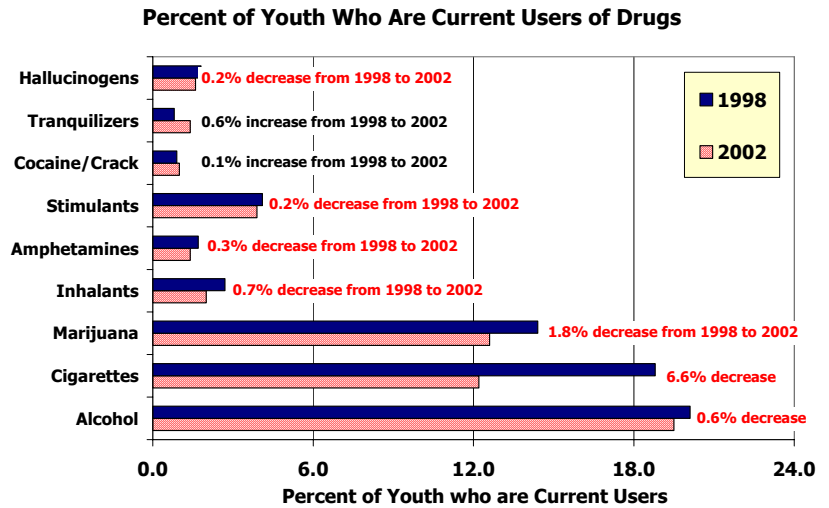
*The drop out rate is based on the number of students who are verified as having left school in each given year.*





## Use Drug Use and Child Care

Frequent usage of drugs by youth declined from 1998 to 2002 for most drug categories.

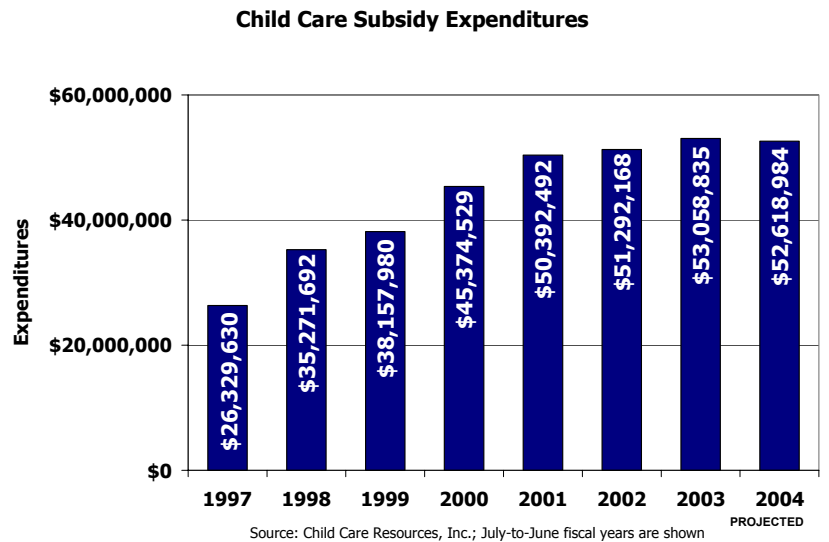


*Average Monthly Number of Children Receiving Child Care Subsidies*

1996-1997: <b>6,584</b>	2000-2001: <b>10,822</b>
1997-1998: <b>8,687</b>	2001-2002: <b>10,511</b>
1998-1999: <b>8,903</b>	2002-2003: <b>10,727</b>
1999-2000: <b>10,517</b>	

Subsidized child care helps lower-income parents remain employed.

CCRI administers Mecklenburg County's child care subsidy program.



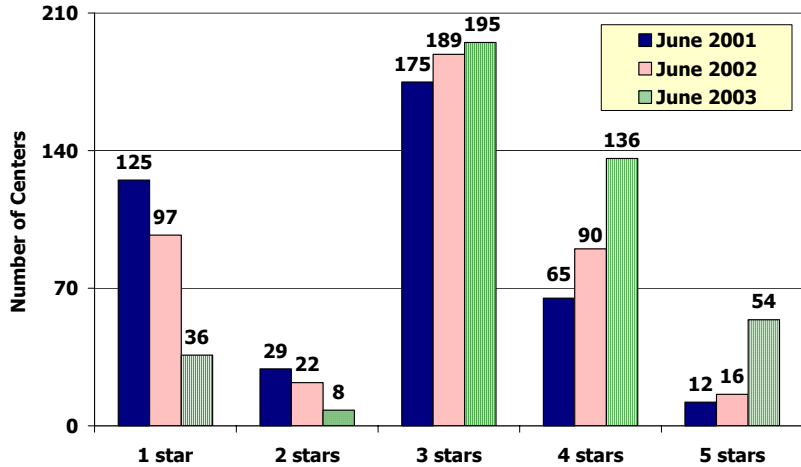
*Funding is provided by the State of North Carolina, Mecklenburg County, Smart Start of Mecklenburg County, City of Charlotte, and Charlotte Housing Authority.*



## Child Care

Licensing as a center is required when six or more children are cared for in a residence, or when three or more children are cared for in a building other than a residence.

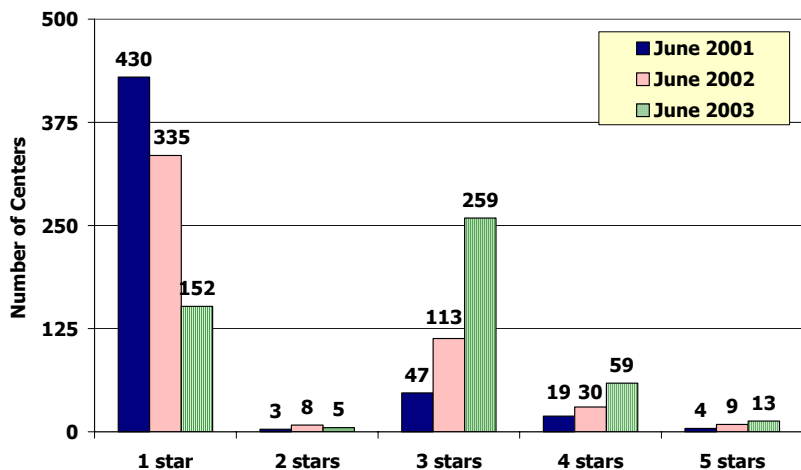
Number of Child Care Centers by "Star" Rating



Source: Child Care Resources, Inc.

North Carolina uses a "star" rated licensing system to distinguish between child care programs that operate at minimum licensing standards (one star) and those that exceed minimum licensing standards (between two and five stars). Religious-sponsored child care programs and summer camps are exempt from the star rating system. The quality of child care has been improving, as evidenced by the decreased number of "1-star" centers and homes and an increase in 3 to 5 star centers and homes.

Number of Family Child Care Homes by "Star" Rating



Source: Child Care Resources, Inc.

A family child care home is licensed to care for 3 to 5 preschool age children.

