

BALTIMORE COUNTY LOCAL MANAGEMENT BOARD

FOCUS ON FAMILIES:

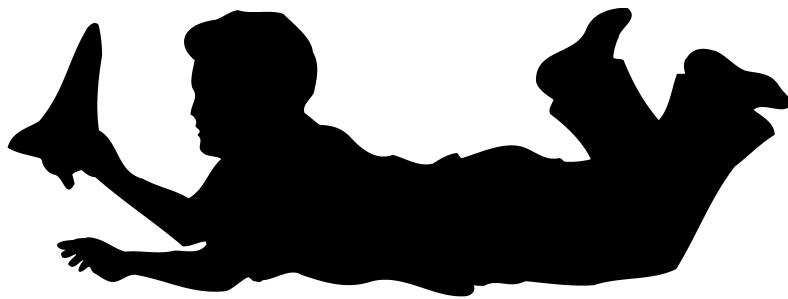
CREATING A FOUNDATION FOR
CHILD WELL-BEING



**MARCH
2002**

C.A. Dutch Ruppensberger
County Executive, Baltimore County

Michelle A. Leverett, M.D.
Chair, Local Management Board



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March 1, 2002

Dear Citizen,

Baltimore County's children are our greatest and most precious resource, and families form the context for every child's success. In our jurisdiction, there are many public and private entities committed to working in partnership with families to ensure the well being of each and every child.

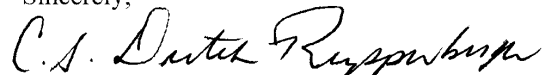
The County's Local Management Board (LMB) is charged with facilitating cooperative, collaborative programming for children and families. The interagency perspective supported by the LMB represents a new approach to service delivery, one based on filling gaps and eliminating duplication of services.


The initiatives developed and implemented by the LMB are results-based and data-driven – that is, the Board is constantly working to ensure that children and families are receiving the best services to meet identified needs, and that public funds are being spent wisely and responsibly.

The following document represents the distillation of data, analysis, and public perception, and sets the stage for future action on issues impacting children and families.

Thank you to all whose tireless efforts resulted in this plan: community members; the general public who responded to our telephone survey; members of the three standing committees of the LMB (Birth –6, 6 – 12, 12 –21); LMB staff; members of the Board; and InterGroup Services.

Sincerely,


C. A. Dutch Ruppertsberger
County Executive


Michelle A. Leverett
LMB Chairperson

CADR:rd



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Part I Background

Chapter 1: Executive Summary

In many ways, Baltimore County begins the 21st century at a crossroads. How we as a jurisdiction address the critical issues that challenge children and families will determine the health of our communities, the preparedness of our work force and, indeed, the quality of life of our citizens.

1.A. County First

This document represents Baltimore County's first comprehensive, cross-agency examination of the many facets of child well-being within its boundaries. The county's Local Management Board (LMB) has selected three "result" areas and 13 associated "indicators" by which to measure the welfare or "social health" of minors in our jurisdiction. Patterned on state-recommended results, those we have selected are:

- Babies born healthy,
- Children enter school ready to learn, and
- Children safe in their families and communities.

In selecting the 13 well-being indicators referred to above, the LMB's three standing committees considered that, when tracked over time, these would most efficaciously demonstrate the success (or lack thereof) of programs and services designed to impact the three chosen result areas.

The information in this report provides us with a clear picture of how Baltimore County ranks in comparison to (a) Maryland as a whole and (b) the other jurisdictions in the metropolitan area. Through the use of myriad charts and tables, this publication enables us to visualize how we are doing at this precise moment and how we have been progressing over the past few years. The exhaustive statistical, "county snapshot" material presented herein on each of the indicators will serve as our baseline for the tracking task ahead.

In addition to gathering a chapter's worth of inter-county statistical comparisons, we also commissioned a public opinion survey. This polling material provides us with another perspective key to the decision-making and policy-setting processes: what child-related issues do the general public perceive as

being the most pressing in the county? And what overlap is there between (a) what statistical analysis reveals to be the most crucial areas of concern and (b) what county residents see as being most worrying? As far as we are aware, no other agency in Maryland has previously made such a cross-walk between public opinion and statistical investigation.



"The LMB has addressed child and family issues in a new way." County Executive C.A. Dutch Ruppertsberger.

1.B. Statistical and Public Priorities

The overlap of data and public opinion is where the LMB should probably first direct resources. The areas of greatest concern in terms of both residents' concern and analytical inter-county comparison are:

- Teen drinking,
- Teen drug use,
- Teen accidental deaths (to some degree),
- Adolescent pregnancy, and
- Property crime committed by juveniles.

On each of these five measures, Baltimore County is out of step with its neighboring jurisdictions — and residents are concerned. These issues must be addressed in a comprehensive manner, in collaboration with other county agencies and community-based partners.

To be sure, there are other areas where our analysis reveals the county to be lagging in relation to most of its neighbors, but



"The LMB's member agencies have collaborated in innovative and creative ways." County Health Officer and LMB Chair Michelle A. Leverett, M.D.



many of these are not on the average resident's "radar screen." The related questions of infant mortality and low birth weights stand out in this regard. Though the public for the most part is not particularly attuned to these matters, the county cannot ignore what the data tell us — that the county's indicators on these two neo-natal indicators are out of line with the rest of the metro area.

On the other hand, there are other issues on which the public exhibits great concern, but perhaps needlessly. Here, we are particularly thinking of drinking and drug taking among 6th graders. While any drinking and substance abuse at this tender young age is too much drinking and substance abuse, nonetheless Baltimore County's statistics in this regard do not reveal it to be in a worse situation than the rest of the greater Baltimore area.

As will become readily apparent over the ensuing pages, the Local Management Board has already

In terms of public perception and statistical analysis, the county's most pressing youth-related concerns are teen drinking, teen drug taking, teen accidental deaths, adolescent pregnancies and property crime committed by juveniles.

begun to demonstrate its acknowledgement of, and commitment to, the problems of our youth, as established both by data and public perception. The Baltimore County Local Management Board will continue to focus energy, attention and resources on problem areas of demonstrated need, and will also direct resources toward very young children and their fam-

ilies, to circumvent these problems in a whole new generation of county citizens.

1.C. LMB Vision and Mission

The LMB's vision is: Baltimore County is a strong, stable community that provides families and children the resources and direction to achieve their potential as productive members of society.

The LMB's related mission is: The mission of the Baltimore County Local Management Board is to maximize the efficient delivery of government and private resources to families and children so that they may lead self-sufficient, healthy and safe lives.

The vision and mission drive the LMB's goals, as follows: The children and youth of Baltimore County are its most valuable and precious

resource. Through collaborative initiatives with public and private agencies, the Baltimore County Local Management Board will seek creative and innovative ways to support families, and meet the needs of children outside the family context. The Local Management Board will develop and recommend policies and programs for children and youth that are specific to Baltimore County communities. The policies and programs will be designed to ensure that:

- All Baltimore County babies are born healthy;
- All Baltimore County children are successful in school; and
- All children residing in Baltimore County are safe in their families and in their communities.

— *Roe Davis, Executive Director*
March 2002



Chapter 2: The Role of the LMB

This paper represents a distillation of the wisdom of numerous people, representing public, private and community boards and agencies. The Baltimore County Local Management Board has, in this report, undertaken to develop a far-ranging analysis with the two-fold purpose of (a) soliciting broad-based expert and community input as to how best to direct programs and resources for the county's children and families and (b) reviewing existing county programs relating to child well-being. This report will serve as a blueprint for services for Baltimore County children into the 21st century.

2.A. Purpose

The genesis of this report may probably be said to have been the 1989 creation of the state Subcabinet for Children, Youth and Families by then-Governor William Donald Schaefer (SCYF 2000:2). The subcabinet or SCYF is an interagency entity made up of the heads of the Maryland departments of Budget and Management, Education, Health and Mental Hygiene, Human Resources, and Juvenile Justice, the Office for Individuals with Disabilities, along with the special secretary for children, youth and families. Other officials may be appointed to the subcabinet at the discretion of the governor (OCYF 2001b). The subcabinet's staff is provided by the Governor's Office for Children, Youth and Families or OCYF.

The subcabinet was charged with spearheading what was known as the "systems reform initiative," the purpose of which was to improve and streamline services provided by state and local agencies for children and youth. By ensuring regular communication among the leaders of the state agencies providing such services, the idea behind the subcabinet was to enhance coordination and reduce duplication among service providers.

A year after the creation of the subcabinet, legislation was passed in Annapolis requiring corollary entities in each of the state's 24 jurisdictions: 23 counties and Baltimore City. (For the purposes of this report, unless otherwise specified, the term "county" includes Baltimore City, which, as an independent city, is for all intents and purposes an urban county in its own right.) Termed Local Management Boards (LMBs), in most counties they were created as county agencies, though in some jurisdictions, such as Baltimore City, the function was contracted to non-profit corporations.

The purpose of the LMBs is to foster coopera-

tion among county providers of services to children, much in the manner the subcabinet does in regard to state agencies. Under OCYF guidelines, the LMBs must at minimum include membership by the county agencies responsible for education, juvenile justice, health, mental health and social services. Membership is not restricted to public-sector entities: up to 49 percent of members can be representatives of private-sector service providers and/or advocacy groups or private citizens, such as parents (SCYF 2000:6). It is important to note that the LMBs are not direct service providers, any more than the subcabinet is. Their purpose is largely one of coordination. Additionally, utilizing state grants channeled through them, the LMBs may contract with public and private entities for the delivery of non-agency-specific, child-related services; that is, services that do not naturally fall under the exclusive purview of any one of the LMB member agencies.

As the local planning entity, it is incumbent upon each Local Management Board to develop the local community-based service delivery system for children and families. After conducting a comprehensive local needs assessment, the LMB drafts a strategic plan and a concept paper to outline the services that are indicated to address the most critical needs and achieve certain desired results for the children and families of the county. The strategic plan and the concept paper provide the basis for the "community partnership agreement," the contracting document between the state Subcabinet for Children, Youth and Families and each county's LMB that commits funding to the county to implement the plan. As the plan is implemented, it is the responsibility of the LMB to monitor and evaluate the services and the county's progress toward achieving the desired results. Under OCYF guidelines, LMBs are requested to consider how to achieve various desired policy "results," which may otherwise be thought of as goals to attain. The state has selected eight results which it wishes Maryland overall to achieve in terms of children's well-being. The eight selected results, or envisioned ends, are:

- Babies born healthy;
- Healthy children;
- Children enter school ready to learn;
- Children successful in school;
- Children completing school;
- Children safe in their families and communities;

The creation of the state Subcabinet for Children, Youth and Families may probably be said to have been the LMB's genesis.



- Stable and economically independent families; and
- Communities which support family life (OCYF 2001a).

As measures of progress toward these results, the state has selected three or four “indicators” per result by which to track progress toward the sought-after

Each standing committee is co-chaired by a representative of an LMB member agency, though not necessarily by the head of the department.

end. Examples include infant mortality statistics as a measure of the “babies born healthy” result and abuse/neglect figures as a measure of the “children safe in their families and communities” goal. The LMBs are invited to adopt any or all of these results as pertaining to their own counties or to devise

new measures, so long as the latter capture information relating to child and youth welfare. In addition to a number of the standard state results, Montgomery County’s LMB, for example, has examined indicators measuring progress toward two results of the county’s own making: “young people making smart choices” and “young people prepared for the workplace” (MCCC 1999).

As described below at § 2.C, the Baltimore County LMB selected three results and a number of associated indicators. The results the county chose to focus on were: (a) babies born healthy, (b) children enter school ready to learn and (c) children safe in their families and communities.

2.B. Involvement

As may well be imagined, many people were involved in the creation of this document. Overseeing the process was the membership of the LMB. Chaired by the county health officer, Michelle A. Leverett, M.D., the LMB in Baltimore County is made up of 12 people. The individual members are listed at appendix 1. Collectively, they represent the county administration, the public school system, health services, social services, juvenile justice, employment and training services, the public library, the police, parks and recreation, and community conservation; there is also a business representative (from the Sheppard Pratt Health System) and a citizen representative.

To deliberate over the details of the plan, the LMB enlisted the efforts and expertise of its three

standing committees. The committees, established in March 2001, were created to consider the needs of, respectively, children aged birth-6, children aged 6-12 and children aged 12-21. Though the committees were not created exclusively for the purposes of the strategic plan, their respective areas of concern coincided quite well with each of the three results selected by the LMB for special consideration.

Each standing committee is co-chaired by a representative of an LMB member agency, though not necessarily by the head of the department. General membership is not restricted to LMB member agencies, nor even to the public sector; indeed, in each case, the second co-chair is from the non-profit sector. Each committee is composed of a variety of personnel, some being county officials and others being private-sector or non-profit experts in their fields. Participants were originally selected based upon their experience in matters relating to children’s services and, in the context of the strategic plan, this allowed some of them to function in the capacity of what are in some circumstances known as “key informants.” (That is, many were representatives of private entities providing services to, or having an intimate knowledge of, children’s and families’ needs in the county.) Each committee has assigned to it one LMB staff member for administrative purposes. A list of the three committees’ membership is at appendix 2.

Coordinating the activities of the LMB members and the three committees are Rosemary M. (Roe) Davis, the LMB’s executive director, and her staff of three: Andrea Breault, Stephanie Farina and Don Schlimm. A local consulting company, InterGroup Services, Inc., was hired to assist Ms. Davis and her staff. Details are provided at appendix 3.

2.C. Methodology

A review of strategic plans devised elsewhere by groups similar to the Baltimore County LMB illustrated to committee members and staff alike the frequent lack of tie-in between (a) the public’s view of issues affecting youth and related services and (b) what statistical analysis reveals to be the case in regard to said issues. To give a hypothetical example, a public opinion survey may reveal crime to be the average voter’s number one concern even during periods of rapidly declining crime. By the same token, the public may exhibit little concern for certain policy issues whose indicators are in fact worsening. This latter characteristic is especially the case for policy issues of a more technical or focused nature. The public’s concerns tend to be “big picture” concerns, whereas those



of policy makers may pertain instead to specific programmatic details. In short, many members of the public may simply desire that “the government” should “do something” about an issue, without excessive concern for what and how, nor even for which level of government. For their part, public officials cannot ignore such details.

Given these tendencies, the LMB therefore decided to conduct the public-input phase of its needs assessment in such a manner (a) so as to require respondents to concentrate on particular issue indicators and (b) so as not to lead to an expectation on the part of respondents for services that the county could not reasonably be expected to provide. Accordingly, the LMB considered it inadvisable to ask members of the public open-ended questions. This (a) would have allowed respondents to present a “wish list” without the LMB’s necessarily being able to glean opinions about policies legitimately within the county’s purview and (b) might have led to subsequent disappointment on the part of respondents when no action was subsequently taken by the county on their public-policy worries. Therefore, early on in the planning process, even before the means of soliciting public input was selected, it was determined as a matter of broad policy to ask respondents questions in the format, “do you think that such-and-such is a problem?” rather than “what do you think is a problem?” A review of the literature revealed that other entities utilizing the open-ended approach had found the public’s concerns to revolve in some instances around views that “youth have lack of respect for authority” and that there are “problems with peer pressure” and so forth (Schenk and Benson 1997). This may be useful information to know — but it is not immediately apparent what a county government can do about these matters.

The Baltimore County LMB wished to concentrate on specifics and thus opted to solicit the public’s views on a range of predetermined issues, each of them within the policy scope of the county government. The LMB directed its three standing committees to deliberate over the issues to be examined, as noted at § 2.B above. Per their wider mandate, the three committees respectively considered planning-related issues relating to children aged birth-6, children aged 6-12 and those aged 12 and above. Each committee’s charge was to select a range of goals and indicators relating to each result suitable for measuring the well-being of children within the pertinent age grouping, based on statistical data. The measures were to be particular enough as to be identifiably within the purview of one or more county agencies (ruling out

answers such as “too much violence on television,” by way of public response), but not so narrow or technical as to preclude framing them in a manner that would excite the interest of the general public.

The committees could and did consider issues applying to more than one result. Given the overlap between the three committees’ choice of results, to avoid repetition, the LMB decided not to organize this report by committee and associated results, but, rather, by result and associated indicators. Therefore, each result may contain the work of more than one committee. As shown in table 1, the final outcome was three results and 13 related indicators (with three indicators in turn divided into subindicators).

With the results and indicators selected, the LMB staff and IGS (the consulting company) then set about compiling statistical material for each indicator from a variety of sources, principally state agencies, the U.S. Bureau of the Census and the Maryland state Department of Planning. Because any given year’s statistical data may contain aberrant matter, wherever possible *trend* data were also collected. This proved feasible for all indicators except one, the “Work Sampling System” (WSS). The WSS was selected as a measure of children’s readiness to learn by the committee concerned with children aged birth-6. The state Department of Education only introduced this method of testing very young children’s school readiness in school year 2000-01 (MSDE 2001a:3-4), so no data from prior years exist.

For all indicators, data were collected for Baltimore County and for the state overall. This was not deemed sufficient, however, as comparing Baltimore County material to statewide material would indirectly involve comparing county data to material that included the rural counties on the western and eastern extremities of the state, a comparison of limited value, given the rural counties’ different demographics and different concerns. IGS was thus instructed also to collect data on the other counties making up the Baltimore metropolitan area, these being: Baltimore City and Anne Arundel, Carroll, Harford and Howard counties. (See map 1, page 7.) Because of these jurisdictions’ relative similarity to Baltimore County, it was felt that the county’s indicators should also be measured against

Each “result” contains the work of more than one of the LMB committees. In all, there are three results and 13 indicators.



Table 1

**Baltimore County Local Management Board:
Selected Results and Indicators**

| Result | Indicator |
|--|--|
| 1. Babies Born Healthy | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A.1. Infant mortality trends & intercounty comparisons. A.2. Low-birth-weight baby trends & intercounty comparisons. A.3. Adolescent birth rate trends & intercounty comparisons. |
| 2. Children Enter School Ready to Learn | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> B.1. "Work Sampling System" test intercounty comparisons. B.2. 1st graders' kindergarten experience trends & intercounty comparisons. B.3. 3rd graders' MSPAP reading scores trends & intercounty comparisons. |
| 4. Children Safe in their Families & Communities | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> C.1. Domestic violence trends & intercounty comparisons. C.2. Child abuse/neglect trends & intercounty comparisons. C.3. Student school suspension trends & intercounty comparisons. C.4. Student chronic absenteeism trends & intercounty comparisons. C.5. Juvenile arrest rates. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> C.5.1. Murder trends & intercounty comparisons. C.5.2. Violent crime trends & intercounty comparisons. C.5.3. Property crime trends & intercounty comparisons. C.6. Juvenile deaths. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> C.6.1. Homicide death rate trends & intercounty comparisons. C.6.2. Accidental death rate trends & intercounty comparisons. C.7. Juvenile self-reported intoxicant use trends & intercounty comparisons. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> C.7.1. 6th graders' consumption of beer & wine within last 30 days. C.7.2. 6th graders' consumption of beer & wine ever. C.7.3. 12th graders' consumption of beer & wine within last 30 days. C.7.4. 12th graders' consumption of beer & wine ever. C.7.5. 6th graders' consumption of illicit substances within last 30 days. C.7.6. 6th graders' consumption of illicit substances ever. C.7.7. 12th graders' consumption of illicit substances within last 30 days. C.7.8. 12th graders' consumption of illicit substances ever. |

theirs specifically as well as against statewide data. For most indicators, a county-by-county "snapshot" comparison is presented for the most recent year with available material, along with trend data comparing Baltimore County to statewide data and aggregate data for the metro area.

The analysis resulting from these comparisons gives us, we are confident, a fair picture of how Baltimore County is faring in the delivery of services pertaining to children as compared to Maryland overall and as compared to the jurisdic-

tions closest to it.

The question then presented itself, how should these issues' and indicators' resonance with the public be tested? In other words, just because the statistical data might indicate that a given issue was problematic, would the average county resident agree? Standard methods for determining public concerns include (a) key informant interviews, (b) focus groups and (c) surveys (telephone or written).

The standing committees had a number of key informants as participants, so further inter-



views with such issue experts were deemed unnecessary.

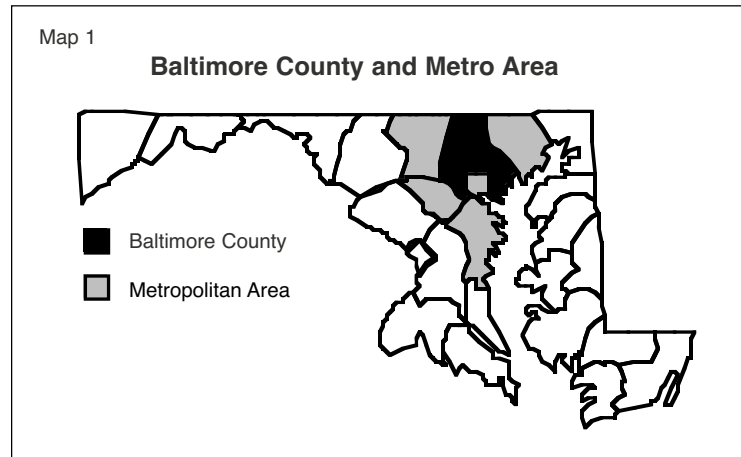
Time and funding pressures precluded the utilization of both focus groups *and* a survey; it had to be one or the other. After due consideration, it was decided to utilize a telephone survey as a means of gauging public sentiment. Focus groups are useful for gathering in-depth information and for exploring unscripted issues that crop up unexpectedly during group gatherings. However, they are also very time consuming and are of limited use as statistically valid measures of public opinion, given the self-selecting nature of the participants and the limited number of people that can be included. Put simply, focus groups are generally made up of interested parties, not regular county residents. It was the views of the latter that we wished to ascertain, so we opted for a poll.

To this end, a request for quotations was issued to three Maryland survey research organizations. The contract was awarded to Gonzales/Arcott Research & Communications, Inc., which in concert with LMB staff and IGS devised a survey questionnaire to be conducted by telephone. Apart from the background questions relating to respondents' income and so forth, there was one question for each of the indicators and subindicators, except in instances where two subindicators were so similar that a question on each would have seemed repetitive. (For example, drinking by 6th graders and drinking by 12th graders, separate subindicators from each other in the statistics section, were for the purpose of the survey collapsed into one single question about underage drinking in general.) There was also one open-ended question at the end of the questionnaire to allow respondents to volunteer issues they thought had not been covered by the previous questions.

The purpose of the poll was to determine the degree to which the issues represented by each of the indicators were or were not of concern to the public. The survey results were then compared with the results of the statistical analysis, allowing each indicator to be classified as one of the following:

- Statistically problematic and publicly problematic;
- Statistically problematic, not publicly problematic;
- Publicly problematic, not statistically problematic; or
- Neither publicly nor statistically problematic.

The purpose of classifying issues thus was not in any way to belittle those that did not register as problematic on both counts, nor to provide an excuse to ignore them. Rather, the purpose was to



assist LMB members in determining the appropriate course of action in regard to a particular issue or policy area. The classification system would also allow LMB members to assign priorities to certain areas. For example, an issue rated as statistically problematic and publicly problematic might be accorded faster target-attainment time lines than an issue considered statistically problematic but not publicly problematic. And an issue deemed publicly problematic but not statistically problematic might be treated differently again. In the case of the latter, the problem might not necessarily be one of service delivery but, instead, one of “message delivery.” In other words, improved public relations might be the only thing needed. It should be added that all the classifications were somewhat subjective. Our criteria for assigning importance, either in terms of statistical analysis or of public opinion, are described in the introductions to chapters 4 and 5.

Our indicators are measured on two axes: public importance and statistical importance. Each indicator is classified as having both, neither or one of these attributes.



Chapter 3: A Sketch of the County

The purpose of this section is to introduce the reader to Baltimore County's history, economy and people, thereby setting the scene for the report that follows.

3.A. Historical Note

Located in the northern portion of central Maryland, Baltimore County covers 633 square miles (including water), making it Maryland's fourth-largest county, geographically speaking, after Frederick County (667 square miles), Garrett County (664 square miles) and Dorchester County (661 square miles) (DFS 1997).

The county was created in 1659, though it covered considerably more land area in those days — most of north central Maryland, in fact, including the areas

Geographically Maryland's fourth-largest county, Baltimore County was created in 1659, though it covered considerably more land area in those days.

now occupied by Baltimore City and most or all of Carroll, Cecil and Harford counties. The sprawling county was divided on a number of occasions. Land for the creation of Cecil County, atop Chesapeake Bay, was ceded in 1674. Harford County was created in 1773. And Carroll County withdrew from

Baltimore County in 1837 (Bunting and D'Amario 2000:29-30). The county commissioners had utilized various locations as their county seat, including, most recently, Baltimore Town, and, before that Joppa, from 1709 to 1768 (Bunting and D'Amario 2000:73). On July 4, 1851, Baltimore, by now styled "City," withdrew from the county, and was created as an independent local government jurisdiction, no longer part of Baltimore County (Bunting and D'Amario 2000:29-30). Towson became the new county seat.

The division of the city from the county seems to have taken a while to sink in to the popular psyche: as late as 1870, the Census Bureau still counted Baltimore City, then only 11.2 square miles, as a district of the county (Hopkins 1877:[4]). Likewise, the cartographer, G.M. Hopkins, made no reference to the city/county partition in the historical narrative section of his 1877 *Atlas of Baltimore County, Maryland*, many of the pages of which were in fact taken up by maps of the city (Hopkins 1877:[5]-[8]). The city/county embrace was of some duration, for

over the ensuing years the city annexed large portions of county land, reaching its present 92 square mile area (including water) in 1918 (DFS 1997:51). The 1918 annexation represented the last change in boundaries for both the city and the county.

Granted charter home rule in 1956, today the county is governed by a county executive and a seven-member county council. There are no incorporated towns in Baltimore County, nor any special tax districts, so county services represent the lowest level of service provision. This is important for the purposes of this report, because all unmet service areas identified in the needs assessment must be addressed by the county government, for there is no lower level of authority to which responsibility may be delegated.

It is probably fair to call Baltimore County the state's most topographically varied county. Within its land area are to be found purely urban areas, suburban areas of various styles, largely unspoiled rural areas and a considerable waterfront area. When observing the densely developed rowhouse tracts closest to Baltimore City, it is hard to believe that Baltimore County also boasts the third-highest concentration of horse farms outside the Lexington, Kentucky and Ocala, Florida areas (Bunting and D'Amario 2000:72). Nonetheless, a short drive to the north from the area around the city will confirm this to be so: rowhouses give way single-family homes and these soon to rolling countryside — and, sure enough, horses galore.

3.B. Demographics

This idyllic scenery survives because the vast majority of the county's population resides in the area immediately surrounding Baltimore City. The county's population, according to the 2000 census and as shown in figure 1, was 754,292, making it the most populated jurisdiction in the Baltimore metropolitan area and the third-most populated in the state, after Montgomery (873,341) and Prince George's (801,515) counties (BC 2001).

Of this population of well over three-quarters of a million people, 90 percent live within what is called the urban/rural demarcation line (URDL), which defines the limits of the public water and sewer system (OCC 2001:12). The URDL is a belt of county land surrounding the city, as map 2 shows, extending out from the county/city boundary at widths varying from about two miles to about 15 miles in places. As an aside, the county recently received praise in reports published by the Baltimore Regional Partnership and 1000 Friends of Maryland for its efforts to



protect rural land outside the URDL from development (McCord 2001).

Because the county has no incorporated areas, it is difficult to define its specific population centers with precision, for it is not easy to say where one area ends and the next begins. The county's 633 square miles have been divided into 31 "regional planning districts" to assist in the identification of unincorporated areas (OCC 2001:12). However, the boundaries of these districts may not always conform with the popular conception of area limits. In the rural areas, in particular, the districts are very large and may include several communities: the Hereford/Maryland Line district, for example, covers about the same land area as Baltimore City.

The most accurate thing to say is that the county's overall population center is the area within the URDL itself, the entire "winged horseshoe" shaped area of developed land surrounding the city on the latter's west, north and east sides. This is hardly precise, however. Counting only those areas with a "Main Street" identity of their own, and moving from west to north to east, the county's population center can be described as comprising the following "mini-centers": Baltimore Highlands, Landsdowne, Arbutus, Catonsville, Woodlawn, Pikesville, Randallstown, Towson, Parkville, Overlea, Essex and Dundalk. Further afield, beyond Pikesville to the northwest, may be found Owings Mills and Reisterstown; beyond Towson to the north, Lutherville, Hunt Valley and Cockeysville; and, beyond Overlea to the northeast, White Marsh. There are no other major population centers in the other parts of the county.

The county's economy is primarily a service economy. Employment by sector is shown in table 2a. Retail trade employs a plurality of the county work force: just under 17 percent of workers are employed in this sector, as opposed to fractional over 14 percent of workers statewide (the latter

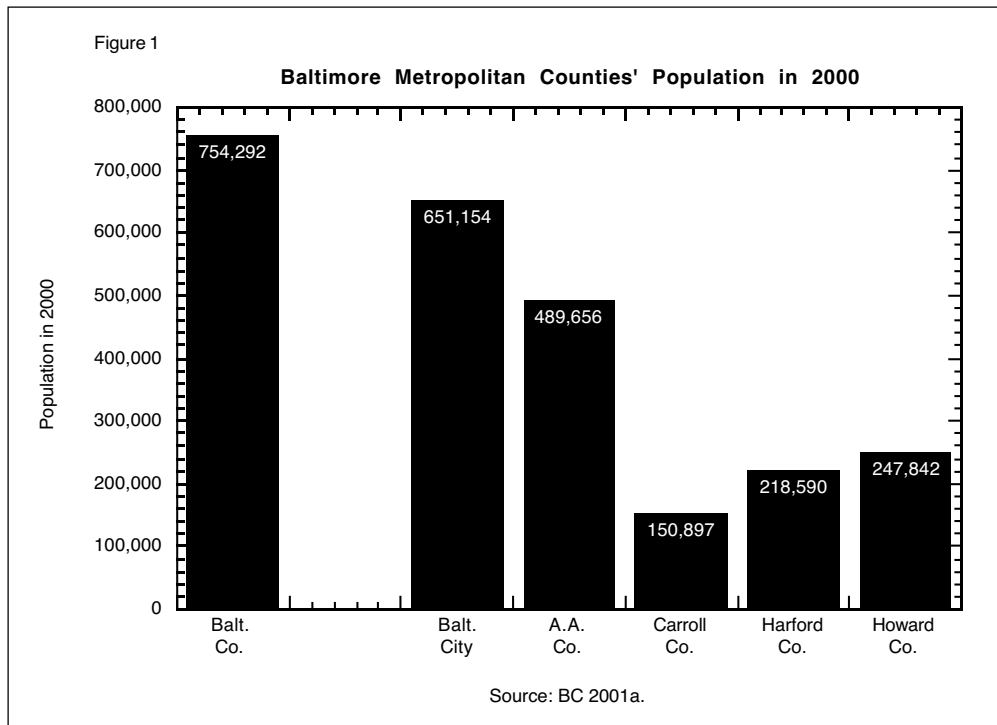
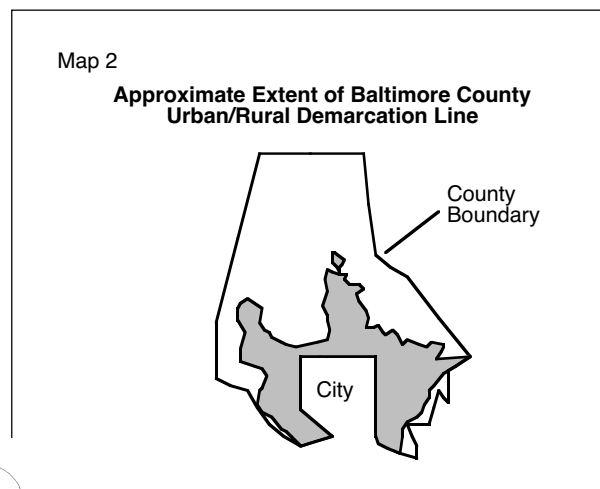


figure also represents a plurality of the statewide work force). Health care and social services make up the county's next largest employment sector: almost 15 percent of workers, compared to about 13 percent statewide. The finance/insurance sector is also important in the county, employing about seven and a quarter percent of workers, compared to under five and a half percent statewide. While the county's is undoubtedly a service economy, manufacturing is nonetheless more prevalent here than across Maryland as a whole: nine and a half percent of county jobs are in manufacturing, as against about eight percent statewide (all figures from BC 1999).



In 1998, there were 19,353 non-farm business establishments in Baltimore County (BC 2001c). As is the case elsewhere in Maryland, most workers in Baltimore County are employed by small businesses. Both in the county and Marylandwide, somewhat over half of all workers are employed by establishments with 1-4 employees. This is shown in table 2b, which also demonstrates that the county's employment distribution across establishment types is little different from the distribution at the state level (BC 1999). In all, there are somewhat over 307,000 workers in the county (1999 data) (BC 1999), of whom 19,886 work for the county in one capacity or another (1997 data) (BC 2001c).

In common with many other areas in Maryland, Baltimore County's population grew significantly during the 1990s. Table 3 shows that a 1990 county population of 694,000 had by 2000 become a population of over 754,000, an increase of 8.6 percent. At first glance, this figure gives the impression that Baltimore County outpaced the metro region in growth. In a technical sense, the county did, for the combined population of all six jurisdictions of the metro area grew by only 6.7 percent. This is a misleading figure, however, for it includes Baltimore City, which lost 11 percent of its population, most of it to the rest of the metro area. Factoring out Baltimore City reveals that the metro area suburban counties — that is, Anne Arundel, Baltimore, Carroll, Harford and Howard counties — grew by 14.9 percent from 1999 to 2000; the state overall grew by 10.4 percent over the same period. In other words, Baltimore County witnessed fairly slow growth compared to the other metro counties and compared to the state. This is not entirely surprising. Many of Baltimore County's residential developments are quite old (50 years is not uncommon), the result being that middle-class residents leaving the city frequently "leapfrog" over the county in favor of newer and supposedly more desirable developments in Harford, Howard and, to a lesser extent, Carroll counties.

Indeed, certain areas of the county lost population during the 1990s. The county Office of Community Conservation has identified 81 census tracts that lost population from 1990 through 1998. Significantly, all but one of these lie either entirely or partly within the URDL. In fact, 51 of the tracts lie within the I-695 beltway, the circular highway that surrounds the city, most of it on Baltimore County land and most of it within only one or two miles of the city boundary. In other words, just as the Baltimore City middle class is leaving for greener pastures in the exurbs, so too

are the residents of Baltimore County's inner ring of suburbs, its most citylike area.

A somewhat similar theme is revealed by an examination of county personal income data, for which see table 4. Real per capita income, in constant 2000 dollars, grew in Baltimore County from \$18,976 in 1970 to \$34,142 in 2000, an increase of 79.9 percent. Despite this apparently respectable growth, Baltimore County's personal income nonetheless was the slowest growing of all the metro jurisdictions, including Baltimore City, whose personal income grew by 84.8 percent over the same period (albeit from a considerably lower starting point). Anne Arundel County's personal income more than doubled from 1970 to 2000. In the 1990s specifically, Baltimore County fared rather better, enjoying real personal income growth of 14.9 percent. In this, it was exceeded only by Baltimore City, at 29.3 percent, and Anne Arundel County, at 18.6 percent (all data derived from DOP 2000c).

Nonetheless, the U.S. Internal Revenue Service reports that the personal income of people newly arriving in the county is lower than that of people leaving it. Between 1994-1997, the average personal income of individuals moving out of the county was \$34,982, while that of persons moving in was only \$31,497 (OCC 2001:5).

Regardless of the details of county residents' personal income, there is no dispute that there are pockets of poverty in Baltimore County. While in 1970 only 4.5 percent of the county's population lived in poverty (OCC 2001:5), in 1997, the most recent year for which comparative data are available, 7.6 percent of county residents fell below the federal poverty line (see figure 2). To be sure, this was well below the metropolitan area and statewide poverty rates of 10.8 percent and 9.5 percent, respectively. But again, these are misleading figures, for both, and in particular the metro area figure, are distorted by Baltimore City's 1997 poverty rate of 23.7, far and away the highest in the state (DOP 2000e). Excluding the Baltimore City figure, the county's 1997 poverty rate was considerably higher than the rates within any of the other suburban counties. Only Harford County, at 6.4 percent, came close. Figure 3 reveals the same pattern for children in poverty. In 1997, 12.8 percent of Baltimore County children lived in poverty, well under the metro area and state figures of 16.7 percent and 14.9 percent, respectively. Again, however, the city figure of 34.4 percent of children in poverty is a distorting factor. Among the suburban counties alone, Baltimore County's poverty rate was the highest,



Table 2a

**Employment Type in Baltimore County and Maryland Statewide, 1999:
Proportion Employed in Named Sector as a Percentage of Jurisdiction's Work Force**

| Sector | Baltimore County | Maryland Statewide |
|--|------------------|--------------------|
| Forestry, fishing, hunting & agricultural support | 0.02 | 0.08 |
| Mining | 0.12 | 0.09 |
| Utilities | 0.24 | 0.61 |
| Construction | 6.34 | 7.45 |
| Manufacturing | 9.50 | 8.01 |
| Wholesale trade | 4.08 | 4.75 |
| Retail trade | 16.79 | 14.03 |
| Transportation & warehousing | 2.23 | 2.72 |
| Information | 2.33 | 3.12 |
| Finance & insurance | 7.22 | 5.45 |
| Real estate, rental & leasing | 2.64 | 2.22 |
| Professional, scientific & technical services | 6.74 | 9.18 |
| Management of companies & enterprises | 2.92 | 2.35 |
| Administration, support, waste management & remediation services | 7.57 | 8.21 |
| Educational services | 1.85 | 2.60 |
| Health care & social assistance | 14.97 | 13.14 |
| Arts, entertainment & recreation | 1.20 | 1.41 |
| Accommodation & food services | 7.69 | 8.05 |
| Other services (except public administration) | 5.20 | 5.42 |
| Auxiliaries (except corporate, subsidiary & regional management) | 0.39 | 1.00 |
| Unclassified | 0.06 | 0.09 |

Table 2b

**Employment Type in Baltimore County and Maryland Statewide, 1999:
Named Business Size as a Percentage of all Business Establishments in Jurisdiction**

| Business Size | Baltimore County | Maryland Statewide |
|-------------------------|------------------|--------------------|
| 1-4 employees | 52.08 | 53.15 |
| 5-9 employees | 19.81 | 19.58 |
| 10-19 employees | 13.19 | 13.06 |
| 20-49 employees | 8.71 | 8.65 |
| 50-99 employees | 3.47 | 3.03 |
| 100-249 employees | 2.12 | 1.85 |
| 250-499 employees | 0.39 | 0.45 |
| 500-999 employees | 0.12 | 0.13 |
| 1,000 or more employees | 0.10 | 0.09 |

Source: BC 1999.



Table 3

**State, Regional and County Population Growth, 1990-2000:
Population in Millions**

| Year | Maryland (x 1 million) | Metro Region (x 1 million) | Metro less City (x 1 million) | Baltimore Co. (x 1 million) |
|-------------------|-----------------------------------|---------------------------------------|--|--|
| 1990 | 4.797 | 2.355 | 1.620 | 0.694 |
| 1991 | 4.856 | 2.376 | 1.644 | 0.699 |
| 1992 | 4.903 | 2.392 | 1.668 | 0.703 |
| 1993 | 4.942 | 2.405 | 1.690 | 0.706 |
| 1994 | 4.985 | 2.416 | 1.715 | 0.709 |
| 1995 | 5.024 | 2.425 | 1.738 | 0.713 |
| 1996 | 5.057 | 2.430 | 1.758 | 0.717 |
| 1997 | 5.093 | 2.436 | 1.778 | 0.720 |
| 1998 | 5.130 | 2.441 | 1.795 | 0.722 |
| 1999 | 5.172 | 2.451 | 1.818 | 0.724 |
| 2000 | 5.296 | 2.512 | 1.860 | 0.754 |
| Growth, 1990-2000 | 10.4% | 6.7% | 14.9% | 8.6% |

Source: BC 2001a, DOP 2000a.

Table 4

**State, Regional and County Per Capita Income, 1970-2000,
In Constant 2000 Dollars**

| Per Capita Income | Year 1970 | Year 1980 | Year 1990 | Year 2000 | Growth 70-00 | Growth 90-00 |
|--------------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| Baltimore Co. | 18,976 | 23,618 | 29,712 | 34,142 | 79.9% | 14.9% |
| Baltimore City | 15,543 | 18,306 | 22,218 | 28,718 | 84.8% | 29.3% |
| Anne Arundel Co. | 16,436 | 22,113 | 27,749 | 32,913 | 100.2% | 18.6% |
| Carroll Co. | 15,517 | 20,612 | 26,109 | 29,914 | 92.8% | 14.8% |
| Harford Co. | 15,533 | 20,807 | 24,651 | 27,956 | 80.0% | 13.4% |
| Howard Co. | 19,466 | 27,545 | 34,046 | 36,871 | 89.4% | 8.3% |
| Maryland Statewide | 17,719 | 21,607 | 27,975 | 32,899 | 85.7% | 17.6% |
| Metropolitan Region | 16,819 | 21,336 | 26,782 | 31,872 | 90.1% | 19.0% |

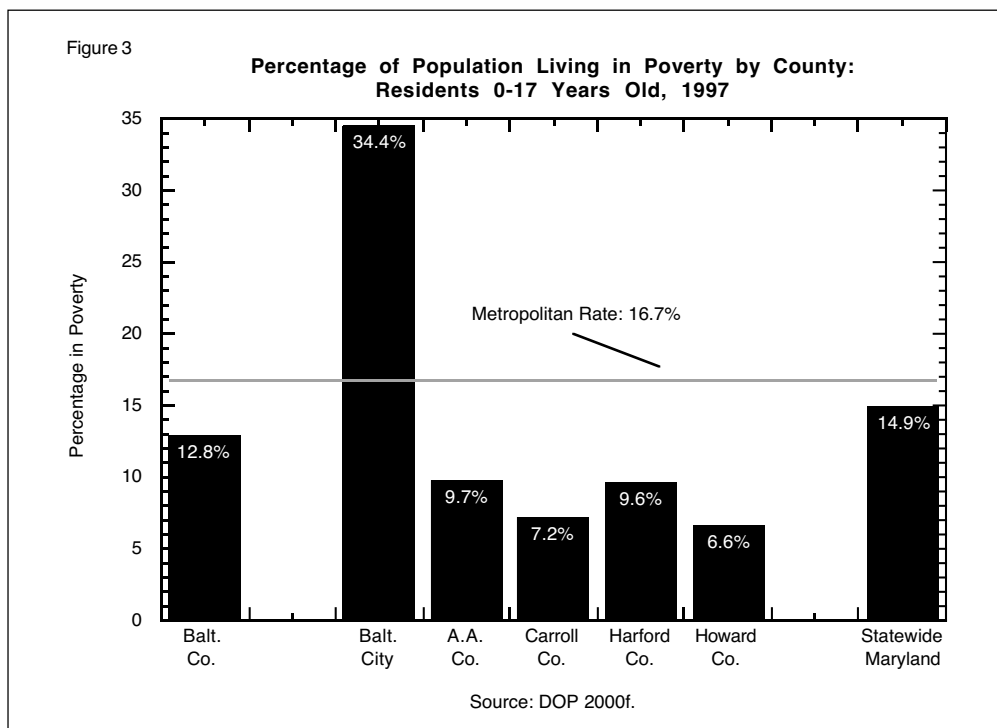
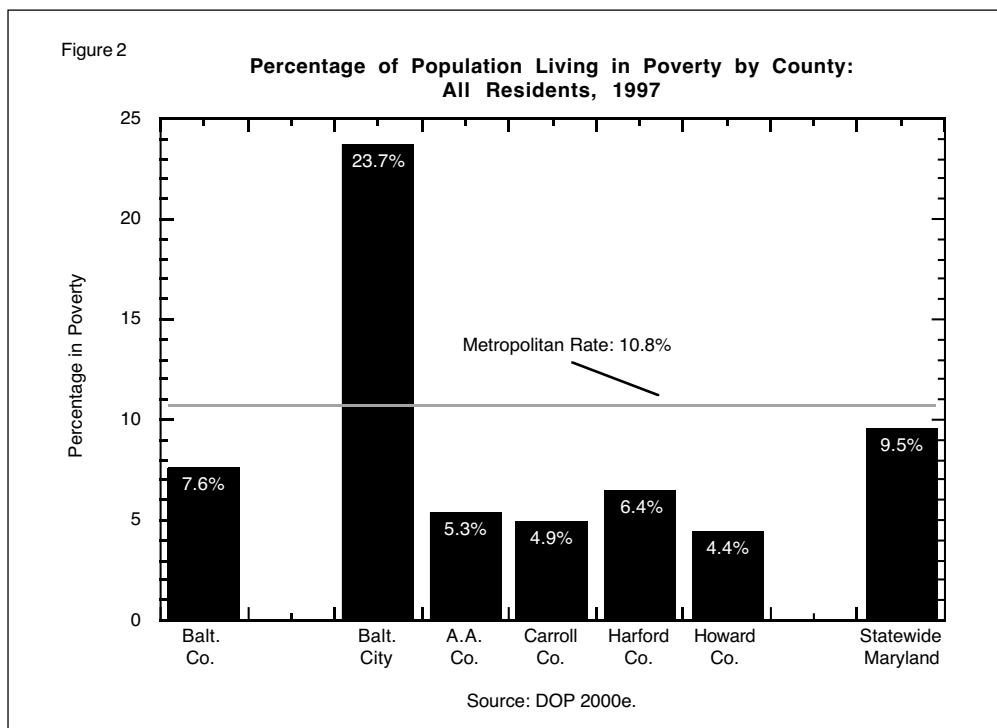
Source: Per capita income, DOP 2000c; inflation adjuster, NASA 2001.



with Anne Arundel County, at 9.7 percent, coming in next.

In addition to having perhaps the most diverse terrain of any jurisdiction in the state, Baltimore County is also becoming one of the most demographically diverse, though this was not always the case. Figure 4 shows that what was an 85 percent white county in 1990 had become by 2000 less than 75 percent white. This was primarily due to a sizable increase in the county's African-American population, which accounted for 12.4 percent of the county's residents in 1990 but a far higher 20.1 percent in 2000. Most of these new arrivals came from Baltimore City. Other minority populations grew too over the 1990s, though without the same demographic impact. Asian-Americans constituted 2.3 percent of the county population in 1990 and 3.2 percent in 2000. The Hispanic population increased from 1.2 percent of the population to 1.8 percent. Native Americans as a proportion of the county population remained more or less static: 0.2 percent in 1990 and 0.3 percent in 2000.

Table 5 shows the issue in another way. In 1970, Baltimore County was virtually all Caucasian. All minorities combined only accounted for 3.6 percent of the population. By 2000, minorities made



up just shy of 22 percent of the county population. As a proportion of the residential makeup of the county, minorities have therefore increased by 508.3 percent over three decades (DOP 2000c). This represents a proportional demographic shift unparalleled in any other jurisdiction in the state, including Montgomery or Prince George's counties.

Table 5

**State, Regional and County Proportional Minority Population, 1970-2000:
Minority Populations as Percentage of Entire Population**

| Jurisdiction | Year 1970 | Year 1980 | Year 1990 | Year 2000 | Growth 70-00 |
|---------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|-------------------------|
| Maryland Statewide | 18.6% | 25.1% | 28.3% | 31.6% | 70.0% |
| Metropolitan Region | 24.2% | 27.2% | 28.2% | 30.4% | 25.6% |
| Baltimore County | 3.6% | 10.0% | 14.8% | 21.9% | 508.3% |

Source: DOP 2000c.

(Certainly, the two latter have higher minority populations than Baltimore County, 28.4 percent and 63.3 percent, respectively, but their starting points in 1970 were higher, so the proportional growth was lower: 415.4 percent in Montgomery County's case and 322.0 percent in Prince George's County's case.)

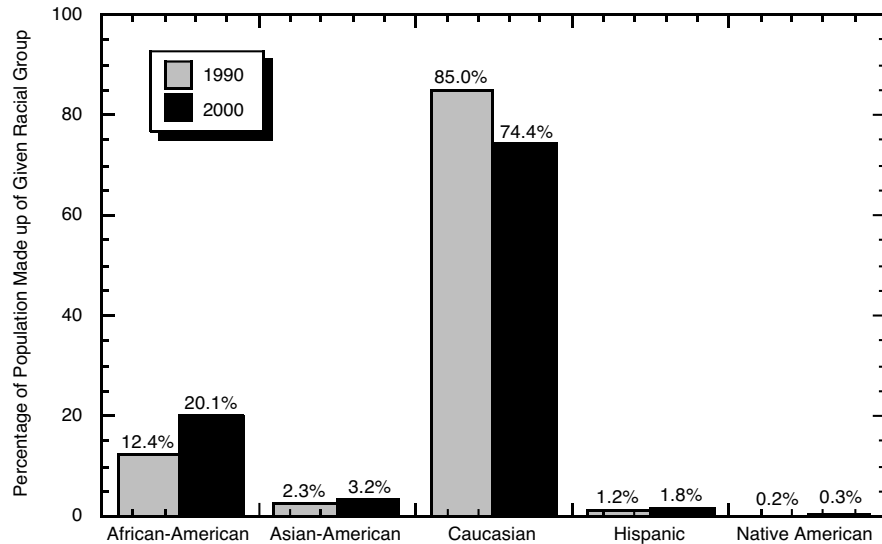
3.C. Conclusion

Topography aside, in some respects Baltimore County is becoming more urban, at least inasmuch as it is beginning to exhibit some of the attributes Americans commonly associate with cities: a relatively high minority population and relatively low levels of population and income growth. Within the next chapter, we shall exam-

ine the degree to which the county has also assumed urban attributes in terms of the indicators selected to measure the LMB's chosen child well-being results.

Figure 4

**Change in Racial Composition:
Baltimore County, 1990-2000**



Source: BC 2001a, DOP 2000b.



Part II

Needs Assessment

Chapter 4: Statistical Analysis

As described in chapter 2, the LMB selected three “results” pertaining to child well-being and a number of indicators relating to each of these results (please refer back to table 1). The LMB’s staff and the consulting firm were then asked to gather statistical data on each of these indicators.

Once compiled, the findings of these statistical investigations were then to be, according to the plan, compared to the results of a public opinion poll in which county residents were asked their views on the same range of issues as those included within the statistical analysis. County officials would then have at their disposal both the popular view of a given issue and the dispassionate, analytical evaluation of that same issue.

Chapter 5 presents the polling results, while this chapter represents the statistical heart of the report. Data for each indicator are here presented in either graphic or tabular format and in such a manner as to permit two comparisons. The first is a “county snapshot,” facilitating a comparison of Baltimore County information for a given year with Marylandwide data and data from each of the other five jurisdictions in the metropolitan area (Baltimore City and Anne Arundel, Carroll, Harford and Howard counties). The second is a trend analysis, comparing Baltimore County trend data to corresponding Marylandwide and regionwide figures.

This chapter is organized in three sections, one for each result. Within each section, there are a number of subsections, one per indicator. The rationale for the selection of each indicator is given within the relevant subsection.

The purpose of this assessment is to ascertain the degree to which the figures associated with each indicator are statistically problematic in Baltimore County. It must be noted at the outset that our measures of what is and what is not problematic have purely to do with the *incidence* of an issue, not its *gravity*. This is to say, the analysis concerns itself solely with whether or not an indicator is more prevalent in Baltimore County than in the neighboring jurisdictions and/or whether or not its incidence has been

increasing or decreasing over time. To illustrate, this report can tell you whether or not the incidence of infant mortality is high or low in Baltimore County as compared to its neighbors and it can tell you whether or not the infant mortality rate has increased or decreased over the past decade. The report cannot, however, tell you that infant mortality is problematic because the issue, of itself, is more important than, say, the incidence of under-weight babies.

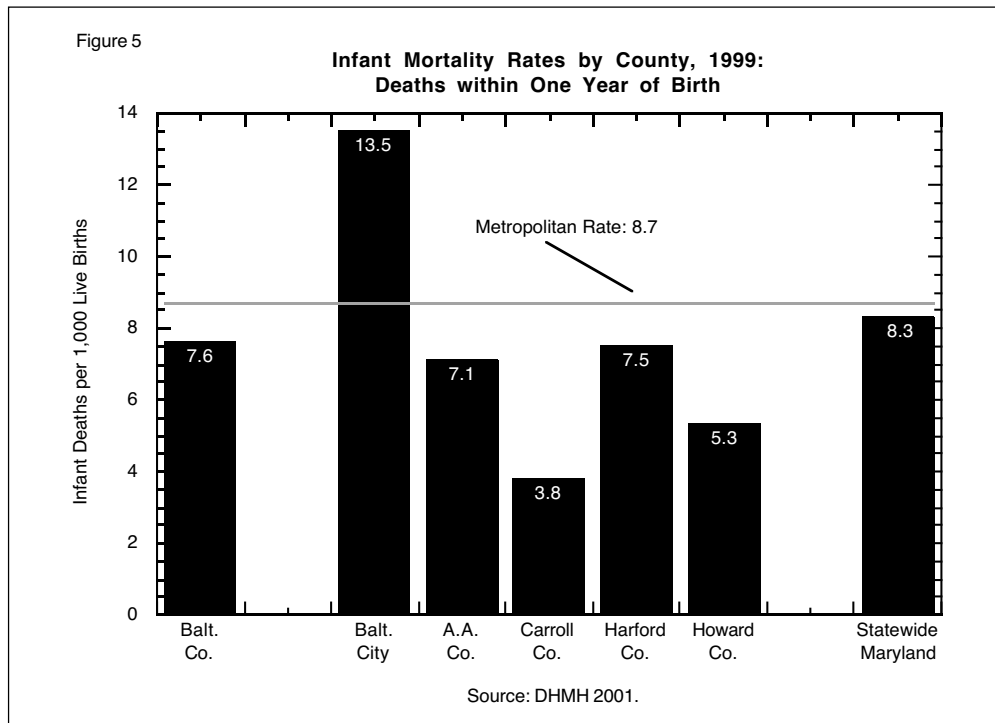
Even so, our assignment of “problematic” as opposed to “non-problematic” status to each indicator is in part subjective. As a rule of thumb, an indicator is deemed problematic if it meets one of the following criteria: (a) Baltimore County ranks least favorably or second-least favorably against the comparable jurisdictions for the latest year for which data are available (usually 1999); (b) Baltimore County’s trend data are unfavorable, regardless of the county’s standing among its neighbors for the most recent year; and (c) Baltimore County’s trend data are favorable, but less favorable than the trends for the metro area as a whole (having the effect of widening the gap between the county and the metro area). Where known, mitigating factors are taken into account and the imperfections of available data are acknowledged.

As a final note, in an attempt ensure the comparability of data, state sources have been used for the most part, as opposed to data collected by the various counties. This was maximize the degree to which the data were collected using the same methodology, vital for comparability.

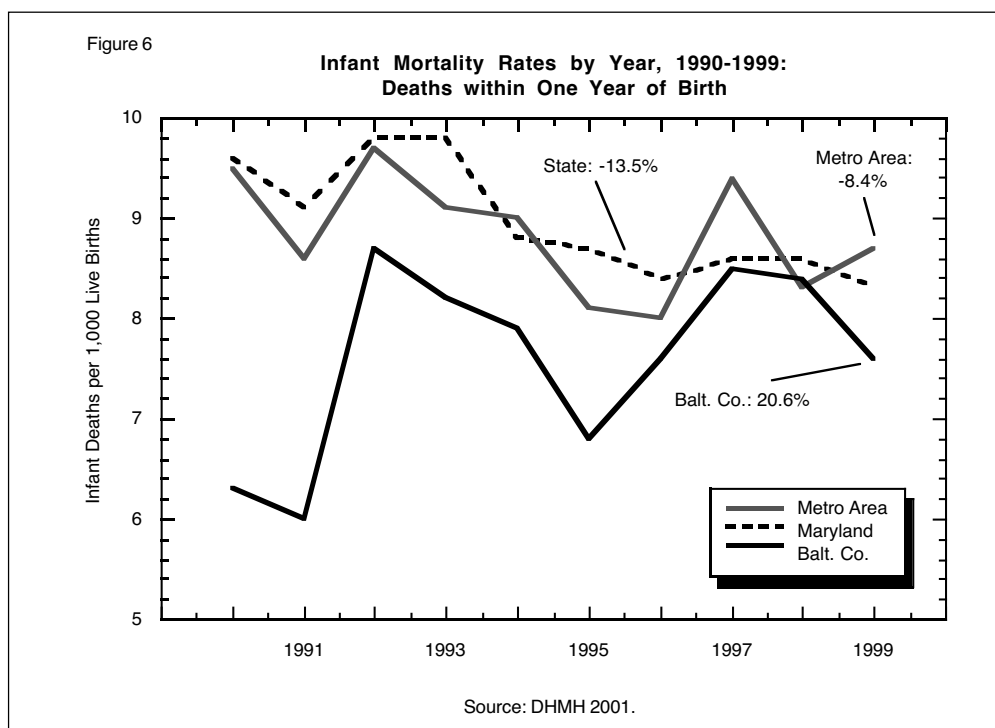
4.A. Result 1: *Babies Born Healthy*

This section describes the first of the LMB’s selected results, “babies born healthy.” Given the vital importance of the first few years of a child’s life in its later development — physical, behavioral and emotional — the standing committee concerned with children from birth through six years of age was well aware of the importance of its undertaking. As measures of progress toward this end, the committee selected three indicators: (a) infant mortality rates, (b) low-birth-weight baby rates and (c) rates of births to adolescents. Each is analyzed separately below.





Turning to figure 5, the “county snapshot,” we see that the county has the second-highest incidence of infant mortality among the metro area jurisdictions. In 1999 in Baltimore County, 7.6 infants per 1,000 live births died before their first birthday, according to statistics compiled by the state Department of Health and Mental Hygiene or DHMH (DHMH 2001). Admittedly, this was only a little over half the Baltimore City rate of 13.5 deaths per 1,000 live births. Nonetheless, Baltimore City represents a special case, to which its high poverty rate of 23.7 percent (DOP 2000e) is undoubtedly a contributing factor. (The city’s poverty rate is over three times Baltimore County’s rate.) Among the suburban counties solely, Baltimore County’s infant mortality rate was the highest. To be fair, the county rate was only fractionally higher than the rates for Anne Arundel (7.1 per 1,000) and Harford (7.5 per 1,000) counties. Given this, we might in certain circumstances be



4.A.1. Infant Mortality

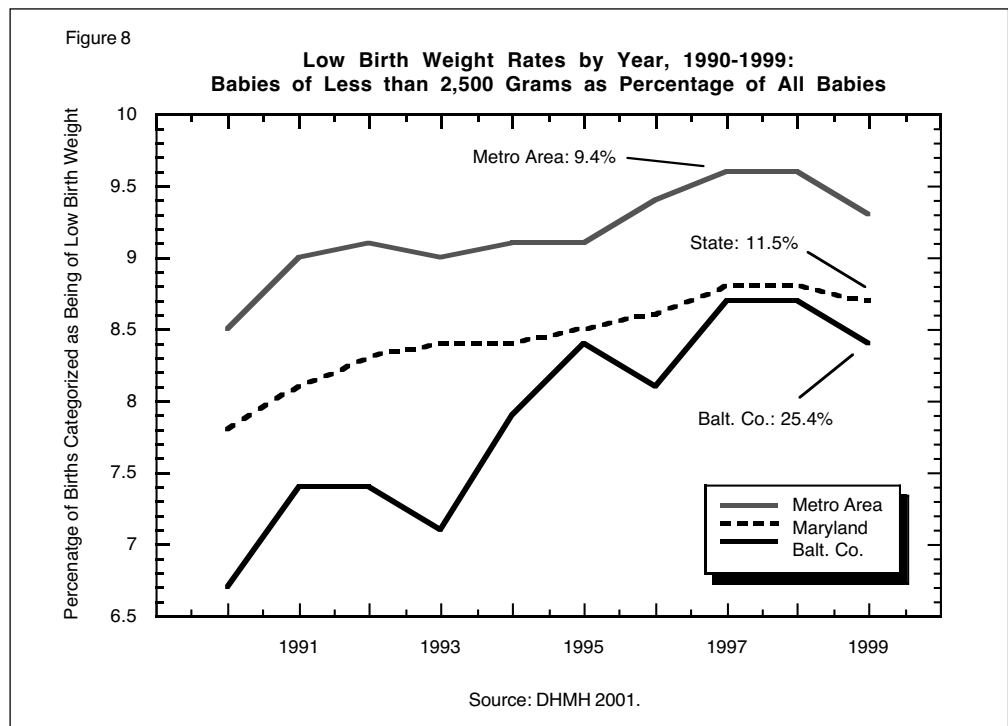
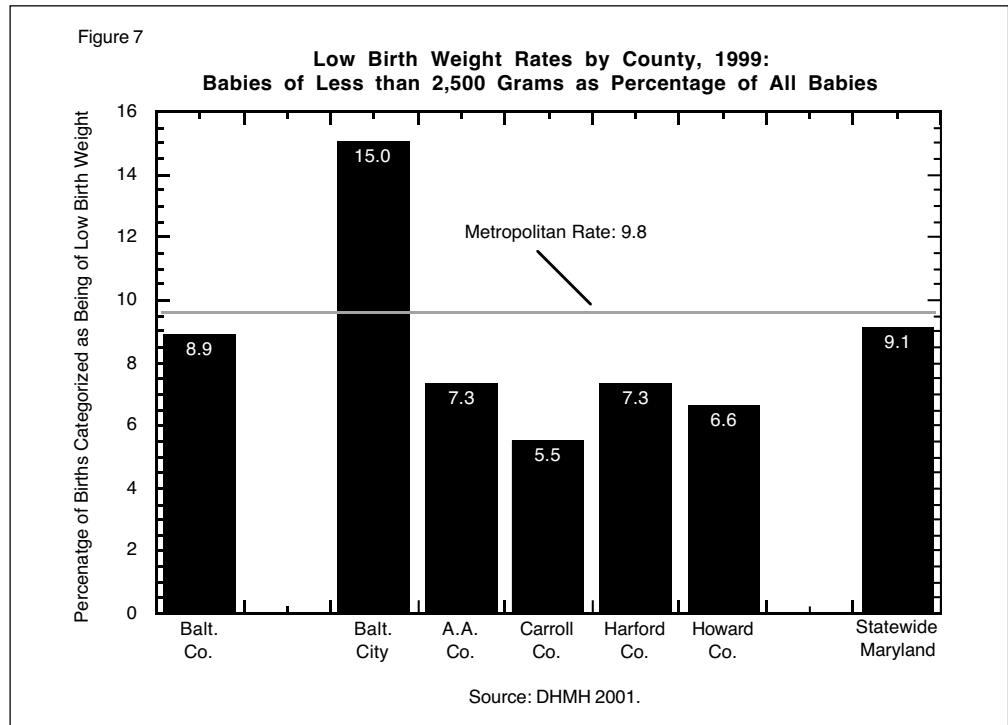
Far from being a distant medical memory, like smallpox, for example, infant mortality is still a troubling issue, even in America and even at the outset of the 21st century. Our statistical analysis reveals infant mortality to be a concern in Baltimore County, too.

prepared to dismiss the county’s infant mortality rate as being within normal bounds. However, a glance at figure 6 gives further pause for concern.

Figure 6 illustrates that, while the statewide and metrowide infant mortality rates have been falling, that of Baltimore County has been rising. From 1990 through 1999, the county’s infant mortality

rate rose 20.6 percent, from 6.3 deaths to 7.6 deaths per 1,000 live births (DHMH 2001). Over the same period, the statewide rate dropped 13.5 percent, from 9.6 to 8.3 deaths per 1,000 births. Simultaneously, the metro area rate dropped, albeit less steadily, from 9.5 to 8.7, a decrease of 8.4 percent.

It will not have escaped the attention of observant readers that, despite its increased infant mortality, the county's rate is still below that of the state and the metro area. This is true, but it is worth making mention of the fact that the metro and even state figures are somewhat skewed by the high Baltimore City infant mortality rate. Factoring out Baltimore City's data for 1999 reveals that, in the rest of the state, there were 62,088 live births. Of these infants, 465 died before their first birth-days, resulting in a mortality rate of 7.5 per 1,000. A similar examination of 1999 metro data minus the city gives us 162 infant deaths out of 23,788 births, a mortality rate of 6.8 per 1,000. Thus, both the revised state figure and the revised metro figure are below the county rate of 7.6 per 1,000 (all figures derived from data in DHMH 2001).



4.A.2. Birth Weights

The issue of low-birth-weight babies is of the same genre as infant mortality, hence the LMB's adoption of this indicator as a measure of child well-being. Infants of low birth weight — usually these are premature deliveries — are at greater risk for a host comorbidities ranging from respiratory problems to



Figure 9

**Teen Birth Rates by County, 1999:
Age Group Under 15**

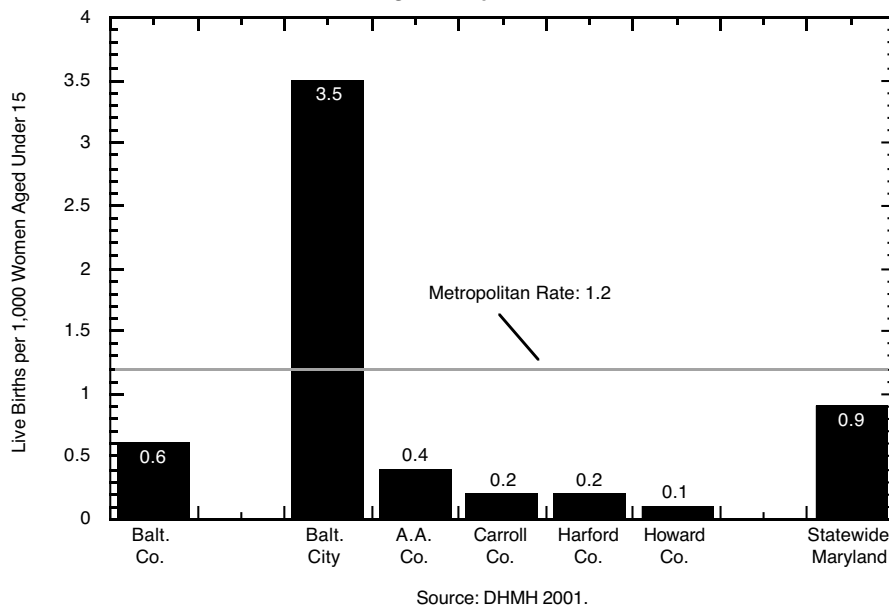
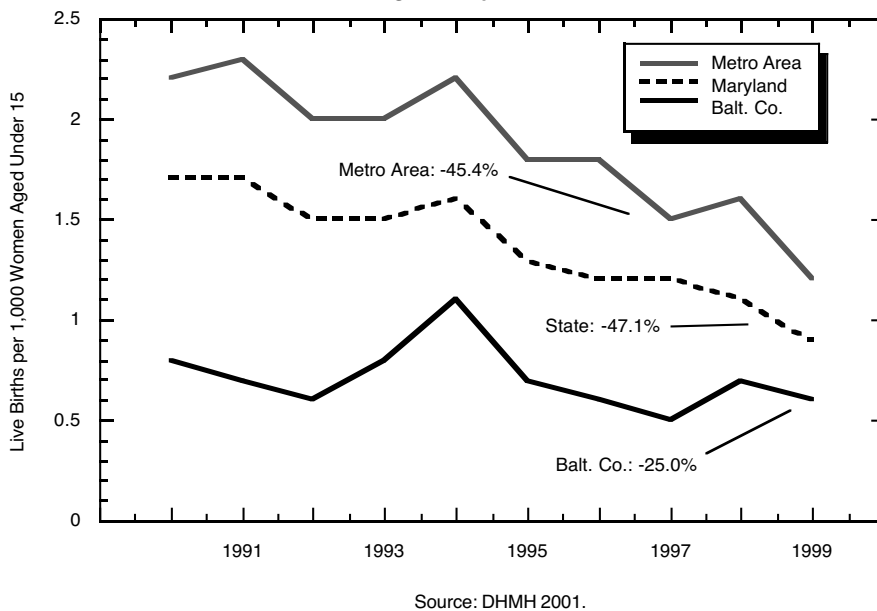


Figure 10

**Teen Birth Rates by Year, 1990-1999:
Age Group Under 15**



in the neighboring suburban counties, as shown in figure 7. The counties with the next highest rates were Anne Arundel and Harford, but each had a rate of only 7.3 percent, well below Baltimore County's rate. Howard County and Carroll County registered only 6.6 percent and 5.5 percent, respectively (DHMH 2001).

Furthermore, figure 8 reveals a considerable increase in the low-birth-weight rate in Baltimore County during the 1990s. It is true that the incidence of babies being born underweight increased at the state and metro levels, too; however, the rate of increase in Baltimore County was considerably greater. Over that decade, the state and the metro region witnessed increases of, respectively, 11.5 percent and 9.4 percent in the prevalence of babies being born at under 2,500 grams. The Baltimore County rate of increase was over twice that: 25.5 percent, from 6.7 to 8.4 low birth weights per 100 births (DHMH 2001).

renal failure. Thus, a reduced incidence of low birth weights is a crucial indicator of infant health.

In 1999 in Baltimore County, 8.9 percent of newborns were determined to be of low birth weight, which is to say, they weighed under 2,500 grams (just over 5 lbs.). This was well below the Baltimore City rate of 15.0 percent, but still above the rates

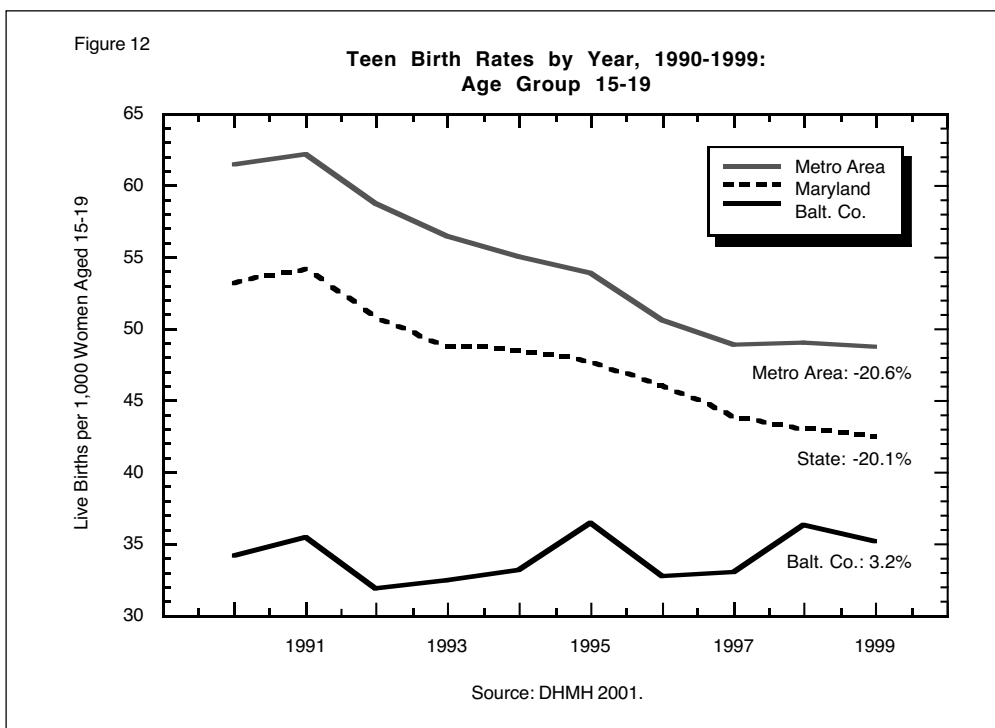
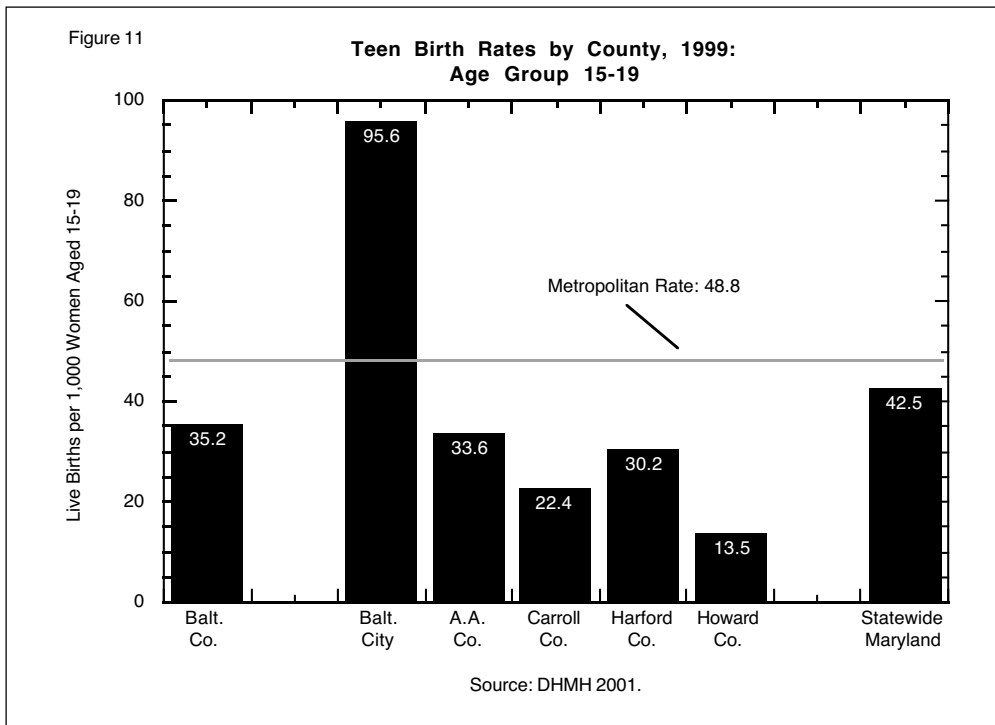
Even given this increase in Baltimore County's indicator, the resulting 1999 county low-birth-weight rate of 8.9 percent was still lower than the corresponding metro and state rates, 9.8 percent and 9.1 percent, respectively. However, as with infant mortality, the two latter figures are skewed by their inclusion of Baltimore City data. Excluding the city from the



calculation gives a statewide low-birth-weight rate of 8.1 percent and a metro area figure of just 7.6 percent.

4.A.3. Teen Births

The issue of teenage child bearing can be a sensitive one for, in discussing the many disadvantages associated with rearing children alone, commentators generally do not wish to appear to be “blaming the victim.” Still, the incidence of teen mothering is very relevant to the examination of child well-being. In direct terms, children born to teens are more likely than the children of older mothers to be born prematurely and at low birth weight; this fact, in itself, raises the likelihood that such children will suffer from disabilities like deafness, blindness, cerebral palsy and mental retardation (Curtin and Martin 2000; Wolfe and Perozek 1997). In indirect terms, in the United States 79 percent of teen mothers are unmarried (Curtin and Martin 2000). Thus, the issue of teen motherhood is closely related to that of single motherhood, which in turn can impede the full realization of the child’s potential. Half of unmarried teen mothers are on welfare within one year of the child’s birth and three quarters within five years (NCPTP 1997). Dependence on income-maintenance payments in turn appears to be a contributing factor



in children’s poor school performance, in the likelihood that female children will themselves bear offspring as teens, and the chances that male children will get in trouble with the law (NCPTP 1997).

Nationally, the teen pregnancy rate dropped throughout the 1990s, by 22 percent, in fact (NCPTP 2001). In 1999, the national teen preg-

nancy rate was 49.6 births per 1,000 girls aged 15-19 (Ventura *et al.* 2001). With 42.6 births per 1,000, Maryland was well below the national rate, ranking 28th in the country. At 72.5 births per 1,000, Mississippi ranked first in teen births (Ventura *et al.* 2001). Compared with these data, the situation in Baltimore County seems relatively insignificant: for the under-15 age group, the birth rate is 0.6 per 1,000; for the 15-19 age group, 35.2 per 1,000 (DHMH 2001). All the same, there are good reasons for concern.

Starting with the under-15 group, at first glance, figure 9 does not immediately indicate a great problem. With 0.6 births per 1,000 girls up to age 15, the county rate is well below the metropolitan rate of 1.2 per 1,000 and the state rate of 0.9 per 1,000. However, as with the two previous indicators, we encounter the problem of Baltimore City's statistics skewing the data somewhat. With a birth rate of 3.5 per 1,000, the city has a powerful effect on metro data, though less so on state data. The Department of Health and Mental Hygiene's data are not presented in such a manner as to allow the computation of metro and state birth rates with Baltimore City subtracted. Still, it is possible to work out state and metro *average* rates without including the city. Factoring out Baltimore City, the metro counties' average pregnancy rate for young teens is 0.3 per 1,000, half the Baltimore County rate. Factoring the city out of a calculation of the state average rate gives a figure of 0.9 per 1,000. High pregnancy rates in Somerset (5.1) and Dorchester (2.9) counties, and above-average rates in Kent (1.7) and Prince George's (1.1) counties, keep the overall state average quite high (DHMH 2001). Regardless of high teen birth rates in these other counties, the fact is that Baltimore County's rate for births to very young teens is half as great again as the Anne Arundel County rate, three times the rate for Carroll and Harford counties, and six times the rate for Howard County.

Turning to figure 10, we see that the rate of young teen pregnancies declined in Baltimore County and across the state, as indeed it did across the country. However, the rate of decline was far greater statewide and metrowide than within the county. Throughout the 1990s, the rate of teen pregnancies among very young girls declined 25 percent in the county, while the corresponding declines for the state and the metro area were 47.1 percent and 45.4 percent, respectively, albeit from higher starting points.

A similar story is told by figures 11 and 12, which present data for the age group 15-19. Figure 11 illustrates that Baltimore County's teen birth rate

for this slightly older group is considerably lower than the city rate or the metrowide and statewide rates: 35.2 births per 1,000 girls aged 15-19, as compared to 95.5 for the city, 48.8 for the metro area and 42.5 for the state (DHMH 2001). Nevertheless, the Baltimore County rate was still higher than the rates for any of the other metropolitan suburban counties. Figure 12 is perhaps more disturbing. As noted above, the national decline in teenage births among those aged 15-19 was 22 percent over the 1990s. As the graph shows, this was paralleled almost exactly by statewide and metro area figures for this age group, the figures falling 20.1 percent and 20.6 percent, respectively. Over the same time period, however, the Baltimore County rate actually *increased* 3.2 percent (DHMH 2001).

4.B. Result 2: Children Enter School Ready to Learn

The second of the LMB's selected results, "children enter school ready to learn," was the most difficult for which to choose indicators. There are few tests administered to 1st graders, and any other measures must be thought of as proxies only. After considerable discussion, the indicators chosen were (a) the Work Sampling System assessment of kindergartners (a direct measure), (b) the proportion of children in the county with kindergarten experience (a proxy measure), and (c) children's scores on the 3rd grade reading tests administered annually as part of the Maryland School Performance Assessment Program (another proxy measure).

4.B.1. Work Sampling System

The Work Sampling System (WSS) is a trademarked assessment tool administered as part of the state Department of Education's Maryland Model for School Readiness (MMSR), and in its own words is a "school readiness framework designed to support teachers to improve assessment and instructional techniques to support young children's readiness for school" (MSDE 2001a:1). The WSS is not a test *per se* but, rather, a system for observing, recording and evaluating kindergarten children's everyday classroom activities. In particular, it assists teachers evaluate pupils in the following areas: social and personal development, language and literacy, mathematical thinking, scientific thinking, social studies, the arts, and physical development. The WSS is based in national standards, and reflects the recommendations of the National Education Goals Panel (MSDE 2001:2-3).



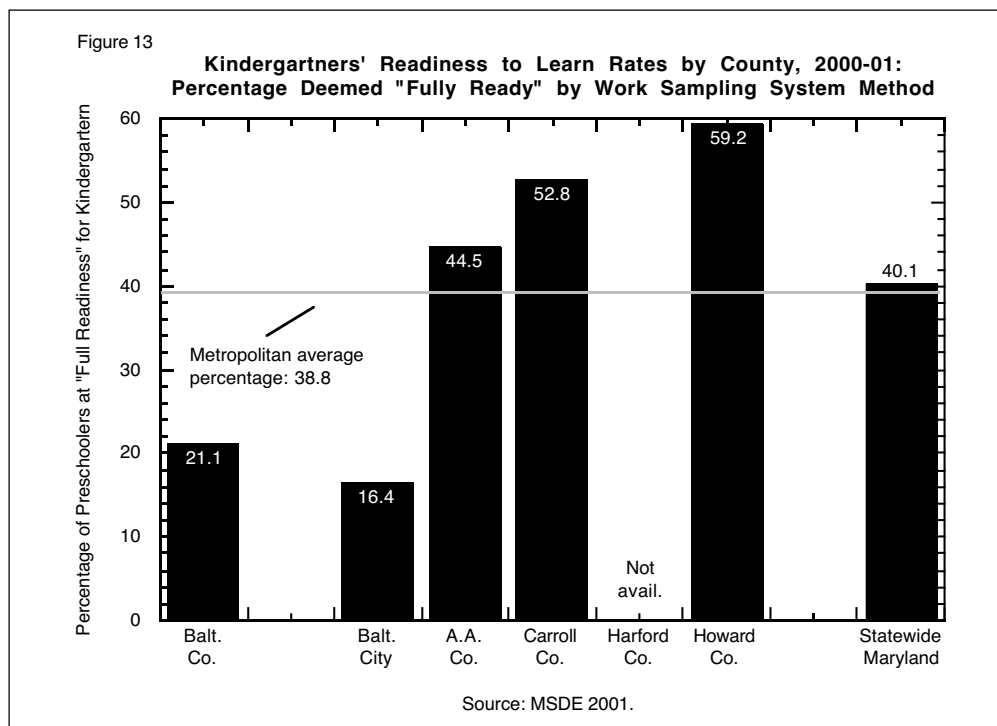
The WSS was only introduced in Maryland in school year 2000-2001, so no trend data are available. We can present only a “county snapshot.” All told, 1,333 teachers evaluated the performance of 23,066 students, which was 38 percent of the cohort of Maryland kindergartners for that school year. Students in all counties participated, with the proportion ranging from a low of 9 percent in Kent County to a high of 99 percent in Allegany County. In Baltimore County, 28 percent of kindergartners participated

(MSDE 2001a:C1). The WSS is the only direct measure of kindergarten readiness used in Baltimore County, but its limitations should be acknowledged. Because 2000-2001 was the first year in which the WSS was administered, there proved to be certain teething problems in some counties in terms of reporting methodologies, though Baltimore County was not one of these. Additionally, it should be remembered that the WSS was only administered to a relatively small sample of children in most counties, including Baltimore County. In the county, the WSS was administered in only 13 schools.

These caveats aside, the results shown at figure 13 nonetheless give some reason for concern. With 21.1 percent of its sample of kindergartners deemed as being at “full readiness” to learn, Baltimore County ranked second to last in the metropolitan area (though note that Harford County data were not available). Though this was an improvement on Baltimore City’s 16.4 percent, it was less than half the Anne Arundel County figure of 44.5 percent. Carroll and Howard counties’ scores were, respectively, 52.8 percent and 59.2 percent. The statewide figure was 40.1 percent. Without trend data, we cannot fully determine the extent of the problem in Baltimore County.

4.B.2. Kindergarten Experience

It comes as a surprise to many to learn that kindergarten experience is not universal.



Recently in Maryland, depending on the county and upon the exact year, anywhere between 2 and 10 percent of entering 1st graders have had no kindergarten experience (MSDE 1991, 1992, 1993b, 1994, 1995b, 1996, 1997b, 1998, 1999a and 2000b). The LMB selected kindergarten experience as a proxy measure of school readiness, on the hypothesis that children without any participation record might be less prepared to learn than those with a history of going to kindergarten.

Table 6 serves as a combined “county snapshot” and trend presentation. In our view, there is no particular cause for concern here. Over the 10-year period, 1991-2000, the proportion of Baltimore County’s entering 1st grade class with kindergarten experience ranged from a low of 87.8 percent (1991) to 96.2 (2000). This represented an increase of 9.6 percent in attendance over 10 years. However, the county’s 2000 attendance rate of 96.2 percent was the lowest of all the metro area jurisdictions, including Baltimore City. The figure was also lower than the statewide attendance rate of 98.1 percent and the metro area average of 98.3 percent (the latter is an average figure, not a measure of the actual metro area attendance rate *per se*). Indeed, for four of the ten years under consideration, the county’s kindergarten attendance rate was the lowest in the area (1992, 1995, 1998 and 2000).

On a more optimistic note, it merits mention that for the most part the annual variations among county’s kindergarten attendance rates are small



Table 6

**Kindergarten Experience by County and Year, 1991-2000:
Percentage of Incoming 1st Graders with Kindergarten Experience**

| Jurisdiction | 1991 | 1992 | 1993 | 1994 | 1995 | 1996 | 1997 | 1998 | 1999 | 2000 | +/- % |
|-------------------------|------|------|------|------|-------|------|------|------|------|------|-------|
| Baltimore Co. | 87.8 | 89.8 | 94.6 | 93.5 | 94.7 | 96.1 | 99.0 | 93.3 | 95.1 | 96.2 | 9.6% |
| Baltimore City | 81.0 | 90.7 | 88.7 | 90.4 | 96.3 | 95.7 | 88.9 | 96.0 | 97.8 | 98.3 | 21.3% |
| Anne Arundel Co. | 92.3 | 98.3 | 97.6 | 97.8 | 99.0 | 98.8 | 98.6 | 99.1 | 96.9 | 98.8 | 7.0% |
| Carroll Co. | 99.5 | 98.8 | 98.7 | 99.4 | 98.9 | 98.4 | 98.7 | 98.5 | 99.5 | 99.6 | 0.1% |
| Harford Co. | 83.1 | 94.5 | 98.5 | 97.5 | 96.3 | 91.2 | 94.3 | 91.8 | 88.8 | 97.1 | 16.8% |
| Howard Co. | 96.9 | 97.4 | 98.6 | 99.1 | 100.0 | 97.8 | 98.2 | 99.2 | 99.4 | 99.6 | 2.8% |
| Maryland Statewide | 88.5 | 94.3 | 96.1 | 96.7 | 97.8 | 97.6 | 97.0 | 97.7 | 97.6 | 98.1 | 10.8% |
| Metro Regional Average* | 90.1 | 94.9 | 96.1 | 96.3 | 97.5 | 96.3 | 96.3 | 96.1 | 95.2 | 98.3 | 9.2% |

* The "metro regional" figures are averages of all the county data for each year and are not directly comparable the county or statewide data.

Source: MSDE 1991, 1992, 1993b, 1994, 1995b, 1996, 1997b, 1998, 1999a and 2000b.

and that, across the board for all counties, there has been an improvement in the rate. Furthermore, any way the figures are considered, the vast majority of 1st graders have attended kindergarten.

4.B.C. Third Grade MSPAP Scores

The LMB standing committees also selected 3rd grade reading scores on the Maryland School Performance Assessment Program (MSPAP) test as a proxy measure of readiness to learn. The logic was that a 3rd grader's score on the test might serve as a useful measure of how ready to learn he or she had been on entering 1st grade two and a half years earlier. Some consideration was given to using instead results from the Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills (CTBS) administered to 2nd graders. However, the MSPAP trend data were superior because the test has been consistently administered since 1993. The CTBS, on the other hand, was in the early 1990s administered to 3rd graders instead of 2nd graders, making trend comparisons impossible.

We see no major reason for alarm in reviewing Baltimore County's MSPAP scores, which are well within the parameters of the other suburban counties' scores. (See table 7.) Exclusive of the city, in 2000 the metro counties' scores ranged from 42.9 percent to 58.3 percent; Baltimore County's score was 43.6 percent. The figures represent the percentage of

students meeting the state's definition of "satisfactory." In every year since 1993, Baltimore County's score has been higher than the statewide score, though it should be added that Baltimore City's low scores exert a downward pull on the statewide data.

This said, Baltimore County's annual scores fall short of the metro average if Baltimore City is subtracted from the equation. And of the eight years under consideration, the county scored lowest among the suburban metro counties six times (every year but 1998 and 2000). All the same, the county's scores improved every year but one during the period and overall improved by 42.0 percent, which was ahead of the statewide score improvement of 37.1 percent.

4.C. Result 3: Children Safe in their Families and Communities

This section concerns itself with the third of the LMB's selected results, namely, "children safe in their families and communities." The previous two results had associated with them three indicators each. This third result comes with seven indicators (a number of them with subindicators). The reason is essentially the greater age span of children captured by this result. The "babies born healthy" result, by definition, only applied to the very youngest of children. That result and its indicators primarily reflected the work of the committee concerned with children aged



Table 7

**MSPAP Achievement by County and Year, 1993-2000:
Percentage of 3rd Graders Achieving a “Satisfactory” Score in Reading Test**

| Jurisdiction | 1993 | 1994 | 1995 | 1996 | 1997 | 1998 | 1999 | 2000 | +/- % |
|---------------------------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|-------|
| Baltimore Co. | 30.7 | 33.2 | 37.6 | 36.5 | 39.2 | 47.0 | 46.3 | 43.6 | 42.0% |
| Baltimore City | 11.7 | 9.2 | 12.1 | 11.2 | 11.8 | 16.6 | 15.6 | 18.5 | 58.1% |
| Anne Arundel Co. | 33.7 | 37.7 | 40.4 | 44.3 | 43.9 | 46.7 | 47.8 | 42.9 | 27.3% |
| Carroll Co. | 32.0 | 42.2 | 41.4 | 46.7 | 49.7 | 52.0 | 49.4 | 46.3 | 44.7% |
| Harford Co. | 37.2 | 39.9 | 43.2 | 46.7 | 51.1 | 57.8 | 52.1 | 49.9 | 34.1% |
| Howard Co. | 38.8 | 45.0 | 51.1 | 53.3 | 57.7 | 59.3 | 60.1 | 58.3 | 50.2% |
| Maryland Statewide | 28.6 | 30.6 | 34.1 | 35.3 | 36.8 | 46.1 | 41.2 | 39.2 | 37.1% |
| Metro Regional Average* | 30.7 | 34.5 | 37.6 | 39.8 | 42.2 | 46.6 | 45.2 | 43.2 | 40.7% |
| Metro Less Baltimore City Avg.* | 34.5 | 39.6 | 42.7 | 45.5 | 48.3 | 52.6 | 51.1 | 48.2 | 39.7% |

* The “metro regional” and “metro less Baltimore City” figures are averages of all the county data for each year and are not directly comparable the county or statewide data.

Source: MSDE 1993b, 1994, 1995b, 1996, 1997b, 1998, 1999a and 2000b.

birth-6. Likewise, “children enter school ready to learn” involved only a relatively small cohort of children. Most work on that result emanated from one committee, that pertaining to the birth-6 age group.

By contrast, the issue of whether or not children are safe “in their families and communities” is one that cuts across all child age groups, from birth to the age of majority. Therefore, this result, while primarily the work of the 12-21 committee, also reflects substantial input from the other two committees (age birth-6 and 6-12). The extensive range of indicators we examine here spans from domestic violence and child maltreatment, which primarily involve younger children, to drinking and drug use among 12th graders, who are at the opposite end of childhood. (A plurality of maltreatment victims are three or under [Sroufe and Cooper 1988:315], while 12th graders, obviously, are usually 18.) Some of our indicators relate to children and youths as the victims of crime; others, to youths as the perpetrators of crime. In all cases, these indicators are vital to the overall well-being of our young ones and of our county.

4.C.1. Domestic Violence

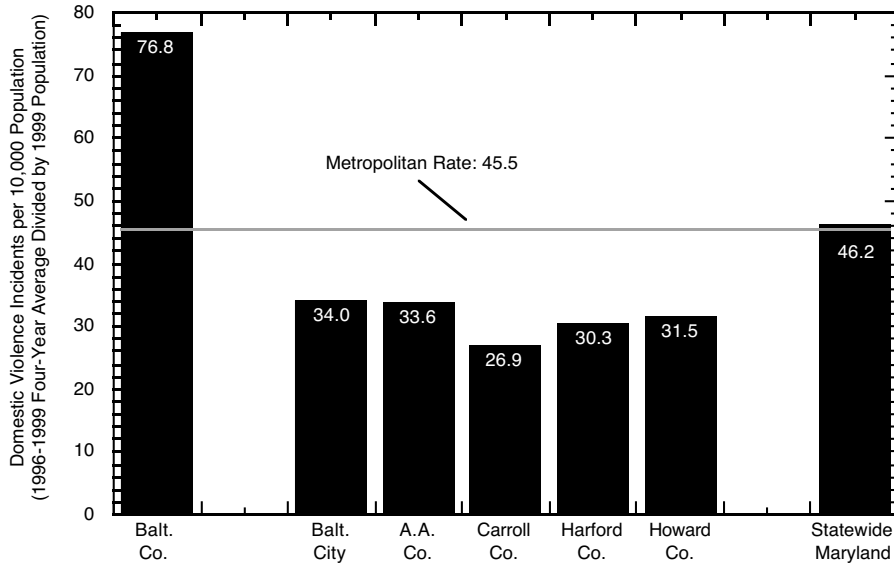
In Maryland, the term “domestic violence” includes a broad sweep of occurrences. Of course, the term includes the common concep-

tion, that is, an incident whereby, in the words of the state police, “an individual has received deliberate physical injury or is in fear of imminent deliberate physical injury from a current or former spouse or a current or former cohabitant. This includes a homosexual relationship” (DSP 2000:52). Additionally, however, the term covers any crime as defined under law against any of the following: (a) “a married person living with [his or her] spouse”; (b) “a married person estranged from [his or her] spouse; (c) “a male [and] female in an intimate relationship who are not married to each other and who are cohabiting or [have] cohabited”; and (d) “individuals of the same sex in an intimate relationship who are cohabiting or [have] cohabited” (DSP 2000:52). Contrary to the popular perception, these crimes may include those that do not involve physical violence or the threat thereof. The full list of pertinent crimes is: homicide, rape, robbery, assault, breaking or entering, larceny, motor vehicle theft, arson, forgery, fraud, malicious destruction of property, illegal weapons, sex offenses, offenses against family and children, disorderly conduct, drug possession, and various other offenses not specified by the state police (DSP 2000:53). Of this list of crimes, assault is by far the most common. In 1999, of the 20,632 crimes statewide classified as “domestic violence,” 19,857 were assault (96.2



Figure 14

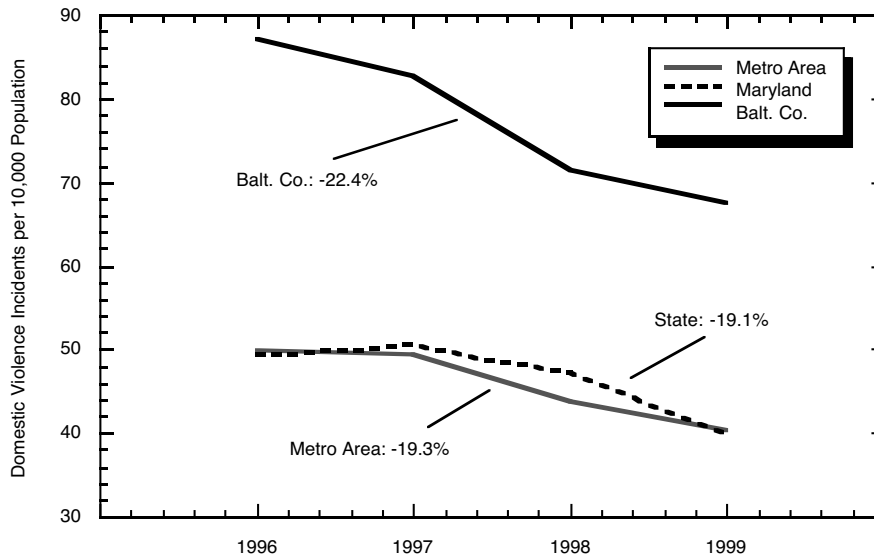
**Domestic Violence Rates by County, 1999:
1996-1999 Average Divided by 1999 Population**



Source: DOP 2000a, DSP 2000:53, 64.

Figure 15

**Domestic Violence Rates by Year, 1996-1999:
Incidents per 10,000 Total Population**



Source: DOP 2000a; DSP 2000:53, 64.

percent) and, of these, 3,238 were aggravated assault (15.7 percent of all domestic violence incidents) (DSP 2000:54).

Even a cursory glance at figure 14 reveals cause for concern. Baltimore County's 1996-1999 three-year average of 76.8 incidents per 10,000 population is well over double the rate of the next worst met-

ropolitan jurisdiction, Baltimore City, at 34.0 per 10,000. (Because domestic violence statistics can vary dramatically from year to year, following state police convention, we have given a three-year average for each jurisdiction, divided by the 1999 population. This gives a truer picture of the annual domestic violence rate.) Indeed, Baltimore County's domestic violence rate is the highest of any county in the state, and is 66.2 percent higher than the statewide figure of 46.2 per 10,000.

To be sure, a word of caution is necessary. County-by-county reporting on domestic violence can vary considerably. In some cases, the relationship between individuals may not immediately be apparent and, especially in cases where no physical violence is involved (larceny, for example), an incident may not be classified as domestic violence when, technically at least, it should be. The Baltimore County police force prides itself on the thoroughness of its domestic violence reporting, so part of the

county's high rate may possibly be explained by particularly meticulous investigation and reporting by local law-enforcement officers.

Figure 15 lends some credence to this theory. From 1996 through 1999, domestic violence in Baltimore County declined by 22.4 percent, almost exactly paralleling the declines in the statewide (19.1 per-

Table 8

**State, Regional and County Child Maltreatment, 1999:
Indicated Incidents per 100,000 Population**

| Jurisdiction | All Maltreatment | Physical Abuse | Neglect | Sexual Abuse |
|-----------------------|------------------|----------------|---------|--------------|
| Baltimore Co. | 99.9 | 37.4 | 40.2 | 22.2 |
| Baltimore City | 495.7 | 113.8 | 342.8 | 38.9 |
| Anne Arundel Co. | 91.8 | 33.7 | 44.7 | 12.7 |
| Carroll Co. | 83.3 | 27.5 | 42.6 | 13.1 |
| Harford Co. | 104.2 | 39.0 | 48.2 | 17.0 |
| Howard Co. | 83.9 | 31.7 | 40.7 | 11.1 |
| Maryland Statewide | 156.7 | 48.8 | 86.5 | 20.9 |
| Metro Region | 198.2 | 55.4 | 120.1 | 22.5 |
| Metro less Balt. City | 94.7 | 35.0 | 42.6 | 16.8 |

Source: DHR 20001, DOP 2000a.

cent) and metrowide (19.3 percent) figures (DSP 2000:53, 64). It occurs to us unlikely that such congruence would appear were the county's underlying incidence of domestic violence cases dramatically out of step with the rest of the state. It seems to us more likely that the basic pattern within the county is broadly speaking similar to that of the rest of the state, but with county police consistently reporting a wider range of offenses. Further evidence for this is that fact that, as reported below, Baltimore County's rates of child maltreatment are not particularly different from those of the rest of the state. We assume that there is a correlation between domestic violence and child maltreatment: certainly, the social and behavioral characteristics of domestic abusers and child abusers are very similar (Zastrow and Kirst-Ashman 1994:192, 378). If Baltimore County's domestic violence rate were truly vastly higher than the rest of the state's, then its child maltreatment rate probably would be somewhat so, too.

Having said this, the county clearly cannot be complacent on the issue of domestic violence. We urge vigilance in tracking data pertaining to this indicator.

4.C.2. Child Maltreatment

Popularly considered among the most dire of offenses, child maltreatment has societal implications, too. Depending on the particular type of abuse, such children may grow up with various handicaps in their ability to function in society. Such

later-life impairments can include aggressiveness, apathy and an inability to bond emotionally (Sroufe and Cooper 1988:316). Child maltreatment is a collective term for three separate things: physical abuse, sexual abuse and neglect. Neglect is disproportionately associated with low-income households, though the other two are more evenly spread across income groups (Zastrow and Kirst-Ashman 1994:190).

In table 8, we consider all three types of maltreatment separately and also collectively. Baltimore County's statistics are not much out of line with those of its neighboring counties. With 99.9 "indicated" maltreatment cases per 100,000 population in 1999, the county's figure was well below the statewide and metrowide figures of, respectively, 156.7 and 198.2 (DHR 2001). The county's figure was higher than the rates for Anne Arundel County (91.8), Carroll County (83.3) and Howard County (83.9), but lower than those for Harford County (104.2) and Baltimore City (495.7). ("Indicated" cases are cases deemed worthy of prosecution, as opposed to merely reported or alleged cases.)

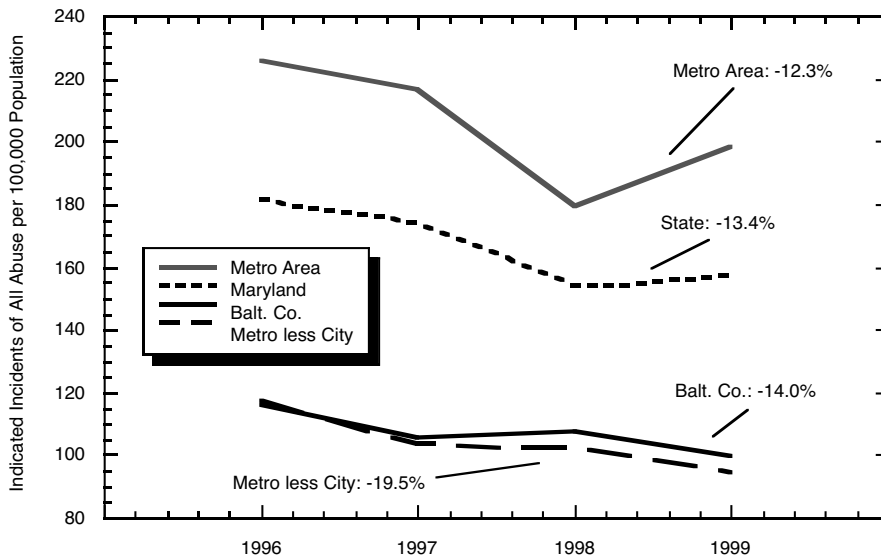
However, this latter reference to Baltimore City returns us to an issue with we are by now familiar, namely, the propensity for Baltimore City data to skew state and metro figures. Removing the city from the equation reduces the metro maltreatment rate from 198.2 per 100,000 to 94.7, which in fact is rather lower than the county rate of 99.9.

When considering physical abuse alone, an



Figure 16

**Child Maltreatment by Year, 1996-1999:
Indicated Incidents per 100,000 Population**



Source: DHR 2001, DOP 2000a.

identical pattern emerges. With 37.4 indicated incidents per 100,000 population in 1999, the county again ranks third in the metropolitan area: behind Baltimore City and Harford County, but ahead of Anne Arundel, Carroll and Howard counties. Likewise, it ranks well behind the statewide physical abuse rate (48.8) and the metro rate (55.4), until the city is subtracted. Subtracting the city results in a metro rate of 35.0, slightly less than the county rate.

As for neglect, Baltimore County fares very well. At 40.2 incidents per 100,000, the county ranks lowest of all six metro jurisdictions. The next lowest is Howard County, with 40.7. The city tops the list with 342.8 incidents per 100,000. This should not surprise us, given the city's high poverty rate and the known correlation between household deprivation and child neglect.

Sexual abuse, however, is rather more problematic. The county registers 22.2 incidents per 100,000, the second-highest rate in the area, behind only Baltimore City, at 38.9. The county rate is almost a third higher than that of the next highest county, Harford, with 17.0 per 100,000.

Figure 16 gives cause for cautious optimism. From 1996 through 1999, the combined maltreatment rate in the county dropped by 14.0 percent, compared to 13.4 percent statewide and 12.3 percent metrowide. On the other hand, with Baltimore City subtracted, the metro decline was 19.5 percent.

4.C.3. Suspensions

The LMB's committees selected school suspension rates for analysis on the theory that suspensions are an indicator of student disruptiveness, and that such disruptiveness is, to a degree at least, a proxy indicator for the stability of a child's home life. It needs to be stated at the outset that suspension is controversial issue. First, and leaving aside the matter of suspension's effectiveness as a means of controlling student behavior, for our purposes the relationship

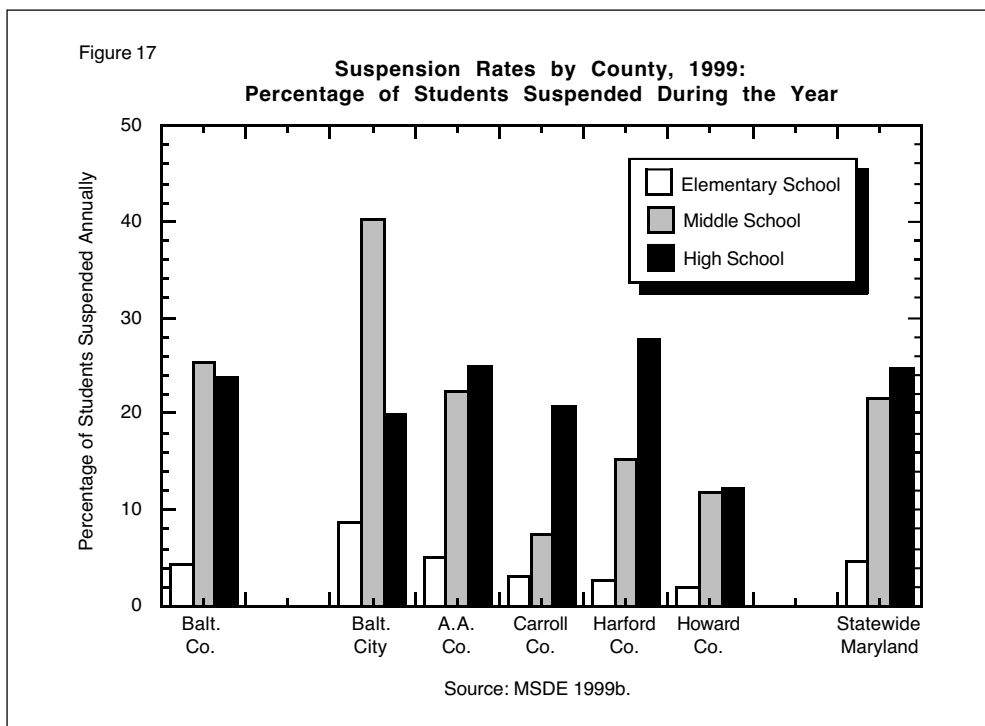
between a student's disruptiveness and his or her home life can only be supposed, not proven.

Second, there is a considerable element of subjectivity as to who does and who does not get suspended. Despite guidelines for teachers and principals defining suspendible and non-suspendible offenses, in practice educators exercise great discretion in suspending pupils. A recent newspaper investigation in Providence, Rhode Island, for example, found that suspension is most commonly used to punish attendance infractions, even relatively minor ones, despite the fact that suspension is supposed to be reserved for punishing threatening or violent behavior (Davis and Landers 2001). The Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) warns that "many factors can influence how a particular offense is perceived and dealt with at a particular school. Local norms and community standards may lead to varying thresholds for determining that a student should be suspended for a certain behavior" (MSDE 1999b:i). In schools with particularly high levels of misbehavior, teachers may after a time become relatively immune to the disruptions around them, leading to fewer suspensions that one might suppose the situation actually warranted. All this said, we are then left with the question, what other indicators are there of student misbehavior? The answer is, not many. As the MSDE says, "Suspensions can be indicators of the most serious student misbehavior at a school.... Suspension information

can be useful in local and statewide needs assessment and program planning efforts...” (MSDE 1999b:i).

Baltimore County presents a mixed bag in terms of suspension rates, as shown in figure 17, the “county snapshot.” At the elementary school level, there seems little remiss. In 1999, the percentage of county elementary school students suspended per year (4.3 percent), was well below that of the city (8.7 percent) and rather below that of Anne Arundel County (5.0 percent); it was also lower than the statewide suspension rate of 4.5 percent (derived from data in MSDE 1999b:9).

By middle school, the picture is more complex. Baltimore County’s middle school suspension rate of



25.4 percent is second only to that of Baltimore City, 40.1 percent. Additionally, Baltimore City and Baltimore County are the only two jurisdictions in the area where the middle school suspension rate is higher than that for high school. The Anne Arundel and

Table 9

**Suspensions by County and Year, 1993-1999:
Percentage of All Students Suspended Annually**

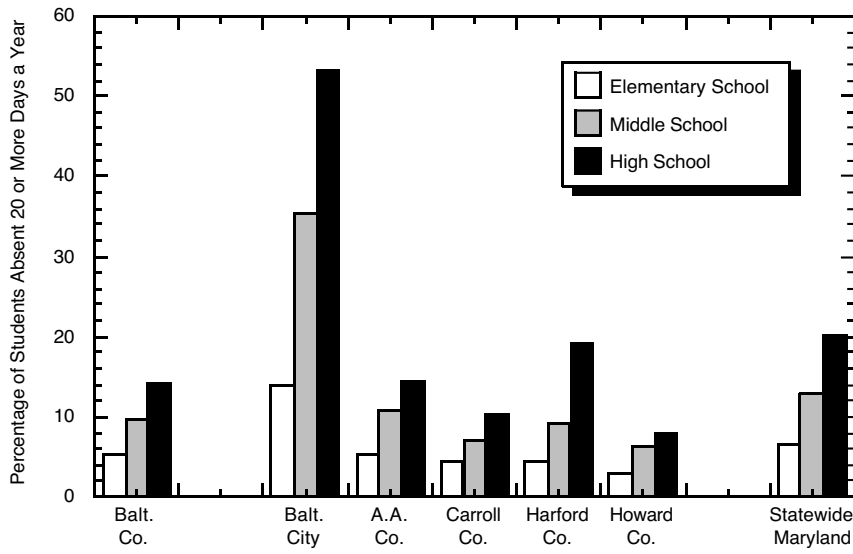
| Jurisdiction | 1993 | 1994 | 1995 | 1996 | 1997 | 1998 | 1999 | +/- % |
|------------------------------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|-------|
| Baltimore Co. | 5.8 | 6.5 | 7.0 | 7.6 | 7.8 | 8.6 | 8.6 | 48.3% |
| Baltimore City | 9.4 | 5.7 | 1.4 | 4.2 | 11.2 | 15.6 | 9.9 | 5.3% |
| Anne Arundel Co. | 7.9 | 8.8 | 9.1 | 9.3 | 9.1 | 9.2 | 8.2 | 3.8% |
| Carroll Co. | 4.8 | 5.5 | 5.9 | 5.6 | 5.5 | 5.6 | 4.9 | 2.1% |
| Harford Co. | 6.3 | 6.3 | 7.3 | 6.8 | 7.7 | 7.3 | 7.2 | 14.3% |
| Howard Co. | 2.9 | 3.3 | 4.0 | 2.9 | 2.7 | 4.9 | 4.5 | 55.2% |
| Maryland Statewide | 6.8 | 7.0 | 6.6 | 7.1 | 8.1 | 8.9 | 7.8 | 14.7% |
| Metro Regional Average* | 6.2 | 6.0 | 5.8 | 6.1 | 7.3 | 8.5 | 7.2 | 16.1% |
| Metro Less Baltimore City Average* | 5.5 | 6.1 | 6.7 | 6.4 | 6.6 | 7.1 | 6.7 | 21.8% |

* The “metro regional” and “metro less Baltimore City” figures are averages of all the county data for each year and are not directly comparable the county or statewide data.

Source: MSDE 1999b.

Figure 18

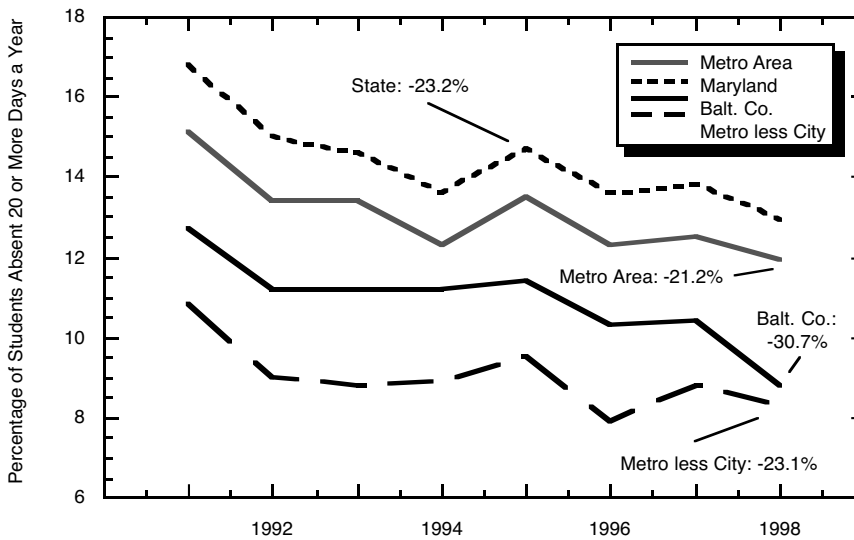
**Absence Rates by County, 2000:
Percentage of Students Missing 20 or More Days a Year**



Source: MSDE 2000b.

Figure 19

**Absence Rates by Year, 1991-2000:
Percentage of Students Missing 20 or More Days a Year**



Source: MSDE 1991, 1992, 1993, 1994, 1995, 1996, 1997 and 1998.

statewide middle school suspension states — respectively, 22.3 percent and 21.7 percent — are broadly comparable to the Baltimore County rate. However, the county is far ahead of the other three area jurisdictions, Carroll, Harford and Howard counties.

The situation in terms of high school suspensions is interesting. Baltimore City's rate of sus-

pension drops to fifth out of six at this level (19.7 percent). Baltimore County itself drops back to third place, with 23.8 percent students suspended, topped by Harford County, with 27.8 percent, and Anne Arundel County, with 24.9 percent.

Baltimore County trend data for school suspensions are not particularly good, as seen in table 9. For the period 1993 through 1999, Baltimore County's overall suspension rate (all grade levels combined) was never the worst in the metro area. However, it was second-worst in three of the seven years under consideration: 1994, 1996 and 1999.

More disturbingly the rate of increase was very high in the county over the seven years. Over that time, the county's annual suspension rate increased by 48.3 percent. With the exception of Howard County, no other jurisdiction in the metro area witnessed an increase of more than 14.3 percent. Howard County saw an increase of 55.2 percent, but from a very

4.C.4. Chronic Absenteeism

The LMB chose to examine chronic absenteeism for the same reason it selected suspensions: as a measure of student behavior, itself a proxy measure of student home life. Chronic absenteeism is defined as being absent for 20 or more days in a school year.

At risk of sounding complacent, all things considered, we do not consider Baltimore County's rate of chronic absenteeism to be particularly problematic. At the elementary level, the county ranks third among the metro jurisdictions, with 5.2 percent of students reported as being chronically absent a year (school year 1999-2000 data), as shown in figure 18. By way of comparison, Baltimore City has a chronic absenteeism rate of 13.8 percent and Anne Arundel County 5.3 percent. The statewide rate is 6.5 percent (MSDE 2000b). The middle school picture is the same. With 9.6 percent of students in this bracket absent more than 20 days annually, Baltimore County ranks third behind, again, the city (35.4 percent) and Anne Arundel County (10.7 percent). The state rate is 12.8 percent. As for high school, the county's rate of 14.1 percent is behind that is Baltimore City (53.1 percent), Harford County (19.2 percent) and Anne Arundel County (14.5 percent). The state rate is 20.3 percent.

Figure 19 concerns chronic absenteeism across all grades combined. As can readily be seen, rates tumbled across the board from 1991 through 1998 (the most recent year for which combined all-grade data were available). In this trend comparison, Baltimore County fares well. Statewide chronic absenteeism dropped 23.2 percent, from 16.8 percent to 12.9 percent. Across the metro area, the rate dropped from 15.1 percent to 11.9 percent, a decrease of 21.2 percent in eight years. However, Baltimore County's absenteeism rate plummeted 30.7 percent, from 12.7 percent to 8.8 percent. At 8.8 percent, the county's 1998 chronic absenteeism rate was only slightly ahead of that of the metro area less Baltimore City, 8.3 percent.

4.C.5. Juvenile Arrests

Juvenile crime is one of those issues one can scarcely ignore, so frequently does it crop up in the media. It is a serious quality-of-life matter, so obviously reflective of the health of a community that the LMB committee dealing with children in the age group 12-21 requested the LMB staff and consultant to locate statistics on three facets of juvenile crime: homicides committed by juveniles, violent crimes committed by juveniles and property crimes committed by juveniles. Each is examined in turn below.

All statewide and county-by-county data are taken from state police material, and so presumably are comparable. However, one caveat must be noted. Offenses are reported by the jurisdiction in which they occurred, not by the jurisdiction of residence of the perpetrator (DSP 2000:3). This may in some circumstances give a slightly misleading or exaggerated picture about the neighborhood criminal element in areas where cross-boundary crime is common. Particularly in locales where one densely populated jurisdiction is immediately adjacent to another, there may be many instances when crimes are committed in one by offenders from the other. In Maryland, the best example of this is Baltimore City and the inner ring of Baltimore County suburbs. Some of the crime occurring in the city may be committed by county residents and *vice versa*.

4.C.5.1. Homicides: Table 10 presents both "county snapshot" and trend data on homicides committed by juveniles within the state and within the metro area. (Juveniles are defined as youth up to and including 17 years of age.) While any murder is a tragedy, it is important to note that annually in Maryland only relatively few murders are committed by juveniles: only about 50 a year, or seven or eight percent of the 650-odd annual total (DSP 2000:124-125). About half of these juvenile homicides are committed in Baltimore City. Elementary mathematics will tell the reader that this leaves two dozen or so a year spread over the other 23 counties, or about one apiece a year. Given these small numbers, the data in table 10 should be interpreted with extreme caution. One additional homicide arrest per year in a jurisdiction such as Baltimore County can give the appearance of doubling the rate. Given this, we can draw no conclusions from table 10, other than that Baltimore County's rate of arrests for homicides committed annually by juveniles is no higher than in the other suburban counties around the city. From 1990 to 1999 inclusive, the county's rate of arrests for murders committed by juveniles was only second highest (after the city) in two years, 1996 and 1997. In three of these years, no such murder arrests were made, 1990, 1991 and 1994 (DSP 2001).

4.C.5.2. Violent Crime: If the picture in regard to homicides committed by juveniles gives

Juvenile crime is one of those issues one can scarcely ignore, so frequently does it crop up in the media. It is a serious quality-of-life matter.



Table 10

Juvenile Arrest Rates by County and Year, 1990-1999:
Arrests of Juveniles per 100,000 Total Population for Homicide*

| Jurisdiction | 1990 | 1991 | 1992 | 1993 | 1994 | 1995 | 1996 | 1997 | 1998 | 1999 | +/- %** |
|--------------------|-------|-------|-------|--------|-------|--------|--------|-------|-------|-------|---------|
| Baltimore Co. | 0.000 | 0.000 | 0.563 | 0.843 | 0.000 | 0.837 | 0.690 | 0.690 | 0.138 | 0.413 | -26.5% |
| Baltimore City | 5.706 | 4.144 | 9.265 | 12.279 | 9.335 | 14.041 | 16.749 | 6.393 | 6.493 | 3.996 | -30.0% |
| Anne Arundel Co. | 0.468 | 0.230 | 0.000 | 0.449 | 0.890 | 0.218 | 0.433 | 0.431 | 1.055 | 0.000 | 125.4% |
| Carroll Co. | 0.000 | 0.000 | 0.000 | 1.518 | 0.753 | 0.000 | 0.000 | 0.000 | 0.000 | 0.000 | -50.4 % |
| Harford Co. | 0.000 | 0.000 | 0.000 | 0.000 | 0.000 | 1.475 | 0.000 | 0.000 | 0.467 | 0.000 | -68.3% |
| Howard Co. | 0.000 | 0.525 | 0.000 | 0.000 | 0.000 | 0.000 | 0.000 | 0.000 | 0.434 | 0.000 | -17.3% |
| Maryland Statewide | 1.652 | 0.885 | 2.119 | 2.759 | 2.058 | 2.539 | 2.977 | 1.413 | 1.383 | 0.967 | -41.5% |

* Given the small number of annual juvenile arrests for murder — other than in Baltimore City, typically only one or two per county, at the very most — these data should be interpreted with extreme caution. In the suburban counties, one additional arrest a year can give the appearance of a 100 percent or more increase in the arrest rate.

** For counties where the 1990 or the 1999 arrest rate is zero, the +/- percentage increase is given to and from the first and or last years with an arrest.

Source: DSP 2001.

Table 11

Juvenile Arrest Rates by County and Year, 1990-1999:
Arrests of Juveniles per 100,000 Total Population for Violent Crime*

| Jurisdiction | 1990 | 1991 | 1992 | 1993 | 1994 | 1995 | 1996 | 1997 | 1998 | 1999 | +/- % |
|--------------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| Baltimore Co. | 67.33 | 78.03 | 85.85 | 86.66 | 96.53 | 98.62 | 110.86 | 123.28 | 90.71 | 103.16 | 53.2% |
| Baltimore City | 147.01 | 147.17 | 148.91 | 162.08 | 174.11 | 171.16 | 196.94 | 158.15 | 118.53 | 119.12 | -19.0% |
| Anne Arundel Co. | 10.77 | 14.97 | 15.28 | 21.54 | 22.03 | 27.21 | 39.38 | 36.41 | 37.78 | 36.71 | 240.8% |
| Carroll Co. | 14.59 | 6.38 | 8.69 | 13.66 | 10.54 | 13.10 | 5.69 | 10.08 | 8.10 | 4.64 | -68.2% |
| Harford Co. | 25.26 | 26.45 | 16.58 | 10.64 | 9.55 | 13.27 | 12.70 | 16.06 | 15.87 | 15.26 | -39.6% |
| Howard Co. | 12.81 | 25.21 | 32.76 | 42.60 | 33.90 | 50.35 | 63.02 | 50.29 | 27.31 | 22.68 | 77.0% |
| Maryland Statewide | 56.66 | 62.10 | 65.30 | 70.37 | 71.13 | 71.94 | 79.14 | 73.34 | 61.07 | 59.65 | 5.3% |

* Violent crime is defined by the Maryland Department of State Police as aggravated assault, forcible rape, murder and robbery.

Source: DSP 2001.

no particular cause for concern, the county cannot afford to be sanguine in the case of overall violent crime perpetrated by youth (again, defined as those under 18). The definition of violent crime



includes murder, along with aggravated assault, rape and robbery. In most places, murder makes up only a very small fraction of the total number of violent crimes, less than half of one percent annu-

Table 12

Juvenile Arrest Rates by County and Year, 1990-1999:
Arrests of Juveniles per 100,000 Total Population for Property Crime*

| Jurisdiction | 1990 | 1991 | 1992 | 1993 | 1994 | 1995 | 1996 | 1997 | 1998 | 1999 | +/- % |
|--------------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| Baltimore Co. | 333.17 | 334.30 | 362.41 | 301.26 | 378.89 | 412.47 | 455.03 | 420.65 | 372.63 | 353.34 | 6.1% |
| Baltimore City | 530.15 | 563.96 | 482.45 | 443.27 | 508.13 | 374.05 | 388.44 | 331.86 | 285.69 | 260.23 | -50.9% |
| Anne Arundel Co. | 259.81 | 298.67 | 305.33 | 298.13 | 350.88 | 336.05 | 387.51 | 355.89 | 307.30 | 275.30 | 6.0% |
| Carroll Co. | 124.01 | 166.67 | 146.09 | 157.89 | 256.74 | 226.31 | 193.87 | 162.06 | 182.29 | 165.15 | 33.2% |
| Harford Co. | 182.28 | 261.46 | 185.08 | 188.45 | 265.30 | 213.82 | 233.57 | 202.89 | 203.01 | 161.88 | -11.2% |
| Howard Co. | 219.40 | 258.92 | 208.03 | 238.26 | 271.20 | 256.86 | 283.61 | 305.92 | 209.42 | 222.61 | 1.5% |
| Maryland Statewide | 298.34 | 320.88 | 305.60 | 280.91 | 314.32 | 293.34 | 306.96 | 288.99 | 257.80 | 233.55 | -21.7% |

* Property crime is defined by the Maryland Department of State Police as breaking/entering, larceny/theft and vehicle theft.

Source: DSP 2001.

ally in Baltimore County (but between one and a half and two percent in Baltimore City) (DSP 2000: 93, 97). Including homicides, there are annually in Baltimore County somewhat over 6,000 violent crimes, of which some 750 to 775 are committed by juveniles (12-13 percent).

Table 11 presents county comparison and trend data that should serve as something of a wake-up call. Throughout the metro area, in every year from 1990 to 1999, the Baltimore County rate of arrests for violent crime committed by juveniles was consistently second only to the Baltimore City rate. In some cases — 1999 leaps out — the county rate was almost as high as the city rate (103.16 compared to 119.12 per 100,000 population). Over the 1990s, the county rate was well ahead of the statewide rate, anywhere between 19 percent and 73 percent ahead, in fact. During this decade, while the statewide rate of juvenile violent-crime arrests increased by 5.3 percent, that of the county increased by 53.2 percent. To be sure, two other jurisdictions saw their juvenile violent-crime arrest rates increase even faster: Anne Arundel County (240.8 percent) and Howard County (77.0 percent). But their starting and ending points were far lower than the corresponding Baltimore County data. Even with its nearly 241 percent increase, Anne Arundel's juvenile arrest rate is still only 36.71 per 100,000, about one third of the Baltimore County rate.

4.C.5.3. Property Crime: Property crime is defined by the state police as breaking or enter-

ing, larceny/theft and motor vehicle theft. Property crime as here defined and violent crime as defined above constitute the "crime index offenses." Property crimes comprised 84 percent of the crime index in 1999 in Maryland, 85 percent in 1998 (DSP 2000:10).

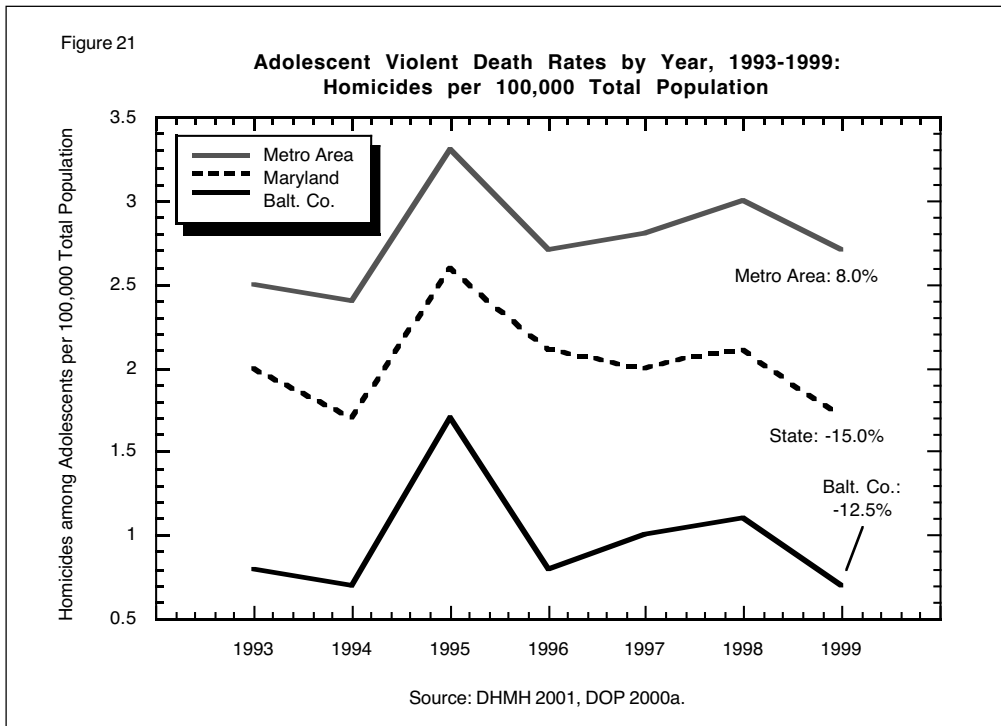
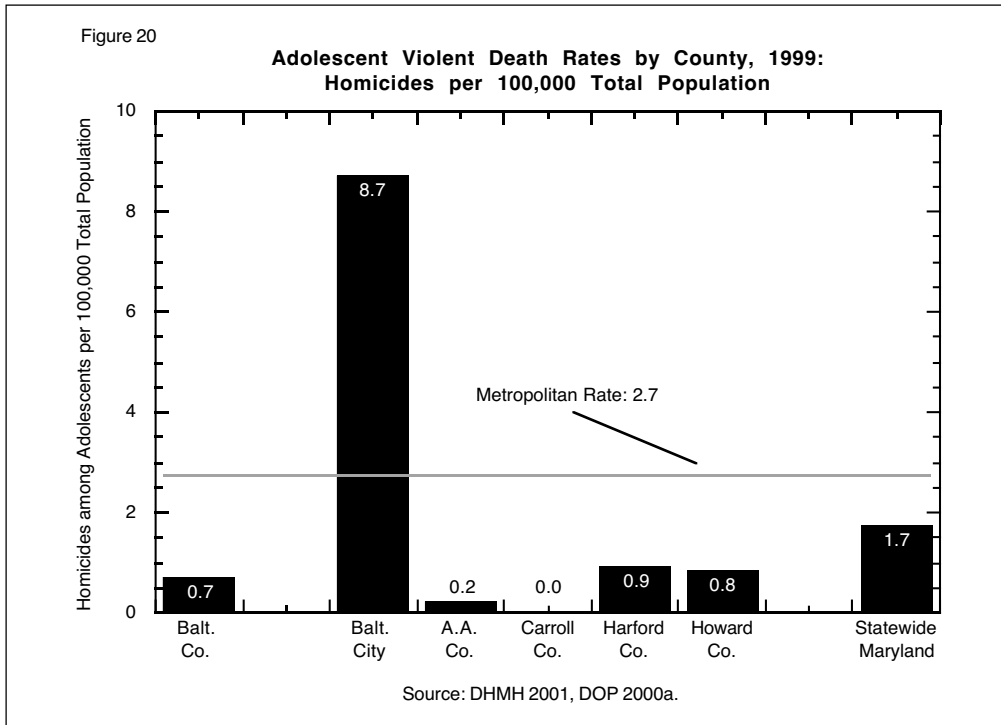
Assuming the accuracy of state police crime data, Baltimore County's juvenile property-crime arrest rate is the highest in the entire metropolitan region, higher than that of the city and every other metropolitan county. (See table 12.) It was the highest for the whole of the second half of the 1990s, indeed, and was the second-highest, after Baltimore City, for the first half of the decade. While property-crime juvenile arrests dropped 21.7 percent across the state during the 1990s, and 50.0 percent in the city, Baltimore County saw an *increase* of 6.1 percent. Anne Arundel County witnessed a comparable increase, 6.0 percent, though its end point, 275.3 arrests per 100,000, was 22.1 percent lower than the Baltimore County statistic. Carroll County also saw a severe increase in its arrest rate, 33.2 percent, but its starting point was very low and so, consequently, was its ending point.

4.C.6. Juvenile Deaths

If the juvenile as offender is one side of a coin, then the juvenile as victim may perhaps be thought of as the other side. For this reason, the LMB elected to examine this issue alongside that of juvenile crime.

Please note that data for this section were taken from DHMH materials. DHMH classifies anyone





ing, fraught with danger. Other than in Baltimore City, there are in any given county very few homicides perpetrated upon juveniles in any given year. In Baltimore County, the range is between five and eight a year for the most part (as against 55 to 65 in the city) (DHMH 2001). Given these small numbers, we cannot draw firm conclusions. All we can say is that the Baltimore County rate of 0.7 per 100,000 population is comparable to the rates in the other metro suburban counties (figure 20) and that the county's trend data almost exactly parallel statewide and metrowide data (figure 21), giving us no reason to believe that there is any fundamental problem in our jurisdiction.

4.C.6.2. Accidental Death: In Baltimore County there are usually between a dozen and two dozen deaths among juveniles as the result of accidents every year. Across the entire state, there are generally between 100 and 125 such deaths (DHMH 2001). "Accidents" can include car crashes, industrial accidents and many

up to and including 19 years of age as a juvenile, while the state police, the data source for the previous section, only thus define someone up to and including 17.

4.C.6.1. Homicide Death: As with arrests of juveniles for murder, so any examination of juveniles as victims of murder is, statistically speak-

types of incident. Two dozen is a small number from which to generalize. Thus, we are hesitant to attach too much weight to our findings.

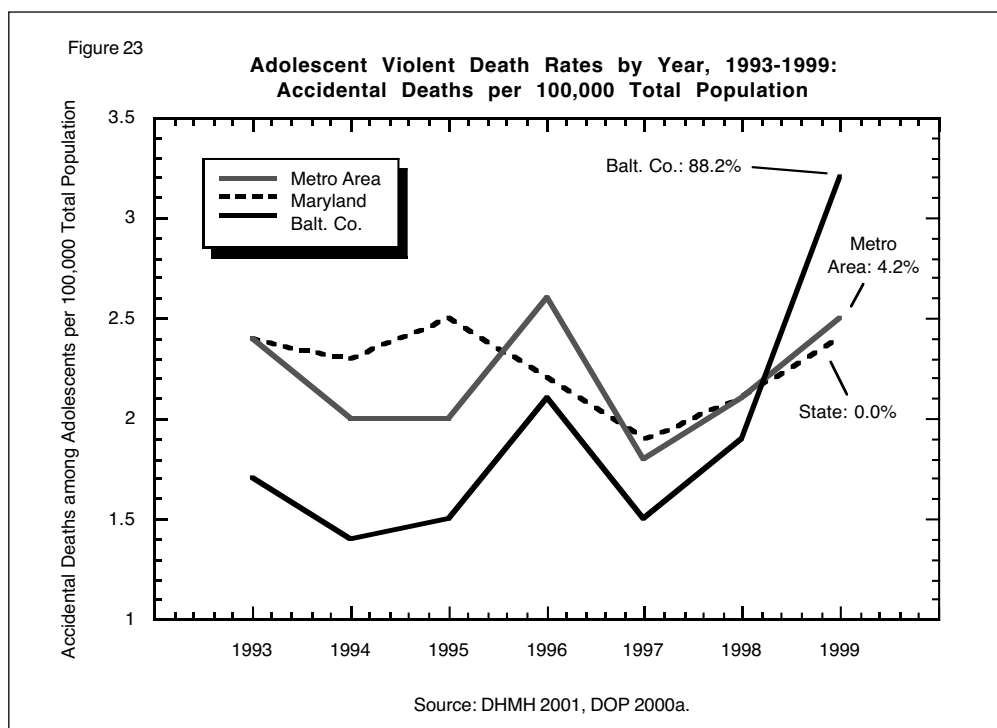
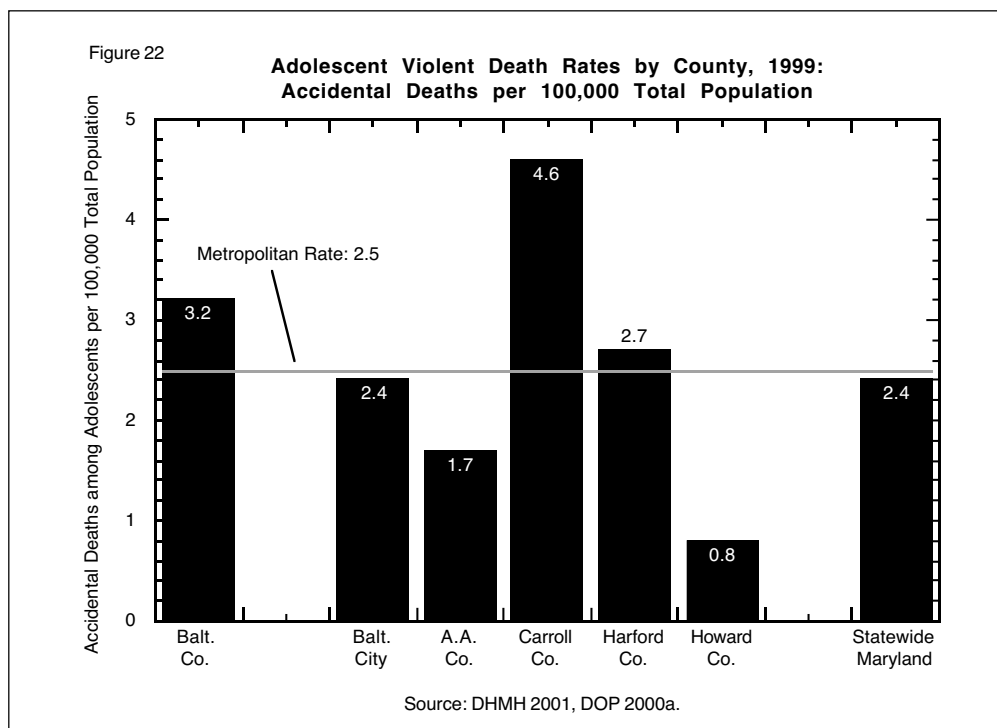
Figure 22 shows Baltimore County's rate of juvenile accidental deaths to have been second only to that of Carroll County in 1999. With 3.2 juvenile acci-

dental deaths per 100,000 population, this put the county well ahead of the metro area (2.5 per 100,000) and the state (2.4 per 100,000). We are unsure to what to attribute this. As figure 23 shows, through 1997, Baltimore County's rate was in fact considerably below those of the state and the metro area. There was a noticeable up tick in 1998 and 1999. However, it remains to be seen whether or not this trend will continue — and, even if it does, it should be borne in mind that the small quantity of accidental deaths annually means that a small change in the numbers can have a significant impact on the appearance of the trend.

4.C.7. Intoxicant Use

One cannot assess the health and well-being of adolescents in Baltimore County without analyzing the impact of substance abuse upon this population. By “substance abuse,” we refer both to drinking and the use of illegal drugs.

We have not addressed smoking in this report. While members of the LMB do not doubt the harmful effects of smoking on health, smoking among teens for the most part does not result in socially disruptive ripple effects. While teen drinking may lead to an increase in the amount of brawling among youth or an increase in the number of automobile acci-



dents, and while drug taking may lead to an increase in the number of acute emergency admissions to hospitals as the result of overdoses, smoking's effects are long-term only and purely health related. Smoking is a quality-of-health issue more than a quality-of-life issue. In this regard, it was considered to be outside the purview of this study.

Table 13

**Self-Reported Intoxicant Use by County and Year, 1992-1998:
Percentage of 6th Graders Having Used Beer and Wine, within Previous 30 Days**

| Jurisdiction | 1992 | 1994 | 1996 | 1998 | 2000 | +/- % |
|-------------------------|------|------|------|------|------|--------|
| Baltimore Co. | 10.6 | 7.6 | 7.4 | 6.0 | 4.0 | -62.3% |
| Baltimore City | 15.4 | 16.3 | 11.6 | 11.7 | 6.1 | -60.4% |
| Anne Arundel Co. | 10.6 | 11.0 | 9.4 | 8.7 | 11.8 | 11.3% |
| Carroll Co. | 10.7 | 5.6 | 4.5 | 7.7 | 4.5 | -57.9% |
| Harford Co. | 9.1 | 9.0 | 5.8 | 4.3 | 4.9 | -46.2% |
| Howard Co. | 10.1 | 11.1 | 4.4 | 5.1 | 2.4 | -76.2% |
| Maryland Statewide | 11.3 | 9.9 | 7.4 | 8.3 | 5.7 | -49.6% |
| Metro Regional Average* | 11.1 | 10.1 | 7.2 | 7.2 | 5.6 | -49.5% |

* The "metro regional" figures are averages of all the county data for each year and are not directly comparable the county or statewide data.

Source: MSDE 1993a, 1995a, 1997a, 2000a and 2001b.

Peer influence and cultural mores are critical factors at this stage of a young person's development. The influence of the social environment has a great impact on an adolescent's decision to take risks, experiment and assert his or her independence (Zastrow and Kirst-Ashman 1994:311). According to the MSDE's most recently published version of its annual book on self-reported intoxicant use among youth, "[S]ubstance use patterns reported by students provide insight into societal values and mores" (MSDE 2000a:10). Use of alcohol remains a critical part of the informal rites of passage for most American teenagers today. It is significant to note that the MSDE study shows that substance *users* are influenced by their *friends* more than by their parents. Conversely, the study also highlights the fact that the influence of *parental* opinion on *non-users* is strong.

The following tables and analyses are based on the MSDE's regular study of adolescents, the *Maryland Adolescent Survey*, conducted every second year (MSDE 1993a, 1995a, 1997a, 2000a and 2001b). Before proceeding, a note is in order about the LMB's decision to use self-reported data as the basis of this analysis. The alternatives were arrest figures and/or conviction data. First, for alcohol consumption, self-reporting is really the only possibility. While it is illegal for persons under 21 to drink, arrests are unusual for underage alcohol use, and convictions very

rare. The same cannot be said for drug use. However, not all persons arrested are guilty and, even when arrestees are guilty, not all are convicted. Thus, the LMB considered that self-reported data would in all likelihood give the most accurate picture of intoxicant consumption among county youth.

4.C.7.1. Drinking Among Sixth Graders: We have selected beer and wine usage as our measure of drinking among youth. The MSDE's biennial report these days presents self-reported data for combined usage of all type of alcohol. However, in 1992, the report presented self-reported data for (a) beer and wine and (b) hard liquor, but not combined data (and the material was not presented in such a manner as to permit analysts to divine it). In 1994, the MSDE started presenting combined data. When we began drafting this report, our supposition was that the MSDE's 2000 report would not be published in time for us to be able to utilize it. This being the case, we decided to use 1992 as our baseline year, so as to extend our trend analysis; the alternative was to use an unsatisfactory 1994-1998 span for our trend analysis. Having thus selected 1992 as our starting year, with its lack of overall alcohol usage, we were thus forced to choose beer/wine or hard liquor as our measure. Of the two, we considered beer and wine drinking to be a better measure of youth activity in this regard. At all ages, in all counties and over all years, the



Table 14

**Self-Reported Intoxicant Use by County and Year, 1992-1998:
Percentage of 6th Graders Having Used Beer and Wine, Ever**

| Jurisdiction | 1992 | 1994 | 1996 | 1998 | 2000 | +/- % |
|-------------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|--------------|
| Baltimore Co. | 39.3 | 18.3 | 16.9 | 13.7 | 14.5 | -63.1% |
| Baltimore City | 36.3 | 29.9 | 19.9 | 19.2 | 19.0 | -47.7% |
| Anne Arundel Co. | 34.2 | 20.8 | 20.9 | 14.7 | 23.2 | -32.2% |
| Carroll Co. | 30.6 | 11.9 | 10.4 | 13.4 | 13.6 | -55.6% |
| Harford Co. | 28.7 | 16.0 | 15.0 | 10.9 | 13.1 | -54.4% |
| Howard Co. | 32.4 | 17.7 | 11.9 | 10.6 | 11.4 | -64.8% |
| Maryland Statewide | 33.4 | 18.8 | 15.9 | 15.7 | 15.6 | -53.3% |
| Metro Regional Average* | 33.6 | 19.1 | 15.8 | 13.7 | 15.8 | -53.0% |

* The "metro regional" figures are averages of all the county data for each year and are not directly comparable the county or statewide data.

Source: MSDE 1993a, 1995a, 1997a, 2000a and 2001b.

beer/wine group is consistently larger than — about twice the size of — the liquor group. We consider the latter probably to be a subset of the former. Most teenage tipplers are likely to “graduate” from the six-pack to the fifth, not the reverse. To have concentrated solely on the hard-liquor drinkers would probably have been to exclude a large number of beer and wine drinkers. However, to report on the beer and wine drinkers is most likely to report on the liquor drinkers, too, or at least most of them. All data exclude the occasional taking of wine for religious purposes. (As it turned out, the MSDE’s 2000 was released before we went to press, but by that time we were committed to using 1992 as our baseline.)

Our analysis indicates that, among 6th graders at least, drinking does not appear out of control. Turning to table 13, we see that, in 2000, of the six metro jurisdictions, Baltimore County had the second-lowest percentage of 6th graders who reported having used beer and wine within the previous 30 days. The county’s result (at 4.0 percent) was significantly lower than that of Anne Arundel County (11.8 percent) and somewhat lower than all the others except Howard County (5.1 percent). The percentage of 6th graders in Baltimore County in this category also fell well below the metro regional average (5.6 percent) and below the statewide beer/wine 30-day usage rate of 5.7 percent.

Trendwise, when comparing responses from 1992 through 2000, the good news is that there was a significant decrease in the percentage of 6th graders in Baltimore County who reported having used beer and wine: 4.0 percent in 1998, down from 10.6 percent in 1992. This represented a drop of 62.3 percent, a rate of decline superseded only by the decline reported by Howard County (76.2 percent). Over the eight-year period, the percentage of Baltimore County 6th graders reporting beer/wine drinking within 30 days has consistently remained lower than Maryland statewide rate, within the exception being the 1996 survey, when the county result (7.4 percent) was identical to the statewide rate.

Usage within 30 days is a measure of the regularity of drinking. However, just because a teenager does not drink regularly does not mean that he or she does not drink at all. For this reason, it is customary for surveys of intoxicant usage also to glean data on the degree to which respondents have used the substances in question, not within

Our analysis indicates that, among 6th graders at least, drinking does not appear out of control. Among 12th graders, matters are different.



Table 15

**Self-Reported Intoxicant Use by County and Year, 1992-1998:
Percentage of 12th Graders Having Used Beer and Wine, within Previous 30 Days**

| Jurisdiction | 1992 | 1994 | 1996 | 1998 | 2000 | +/- % |
|-------------------------|------|------|------|------|------|--------|
| Baltimore Co. | 48.8 | 53.2 | 53.1 | 55.5 | 49.9 | 2.3% |
| Baltimore City | 46.6 | 31.5 | 31.3 | 24.5 | 23.3 | -50.0% |
| Anne Arundel Co. | 56.0 | 54.3 | 51.4 | 58.3 | 49.3 | -12.0% |
| Carroll Co. | 53.4 | 57.0 | 53.7 | 53.1 | 44.0 | -17.6% |
| Harford Co. | 56.5 | 53.1 | 55.1 | 49.7 | 50.9 | -9.9% |
| Howard Co. | 55.5 | 52.4 | 52.2 | 40.6 | 46.7 | -15.9% |
| Maryland Statewide | 51.2 | 50.8 | 49.3 | 45.2 | 42.4 | -17.2% |
| Metro Regional Average* | 52.8 | 50.2 | 49.5 | 46.9 | 44.0 | -11.2% |

* The "metro regional" figures are averages of all the county data for each year and are not directly comparable the county or statewide data.

Source: MSDE 1993a, 1995a, 1997a, 2000a and 2001b.

the past month, but ever. For 6th graders, this is reported in table 14. In comparison to the rest of the counties within the metro area, Baltimore County's percentage in 2000 was the third-highest, down from the highest in 1992. With 14.5 percent of 6th graders reporting having had a drink of beer or wine at least once, the county was behind Anne Arundel County and the city (23.2 percent and 19.0 percent, respectively), but ahead of Carroll, Harford and Howard counties.

Further analysis indicates positive trends among these 12-year-olds in Baltimore County. When comparing the results from 1992 to 2000, there is a significant drop in the percentage of 6th graders who reported drinking beer and wine during their lifetimes, from 39.3 percent in 1992 to 14.5 percent in 1998. This is a decrease of 63.1 percent, the second-greatest decrease among the six jurisdictions in the metro region. (Howard County's decrease was higher: 64.8 percent.) The county's decrease over the period

was also greater than the corresponding statewide figure, 53.3 percent. Furthermore, Baltimore County began from having a reported figure well above that of the state in 1992 (county, 39.3 percent; state, 33.4 percent). The county has ended up below the state figure (14.5 percent to 15.8 percent).

On a more sobering note, the proportion of regular drinkers within the larger group of all drinkers has not decreased. Of those 6th graders in 2000 who reported having drunk alcohol in their lifetimes, 27.6 percent also reported having used beer and wine during the previous 30 days. Similarly, in 1992, 27.0 percent of those 6th graders who reported using these beverages reported actually using them within the previous month.

4.C.7.2. Drinking Among Twelfth Graders: At the 12th-grade level, the picture is less positive, as recorded on tables 15 and 16. Baltimore County's percentage of 12th graders reporting recent use of alcohol was the second-lowest in the region in 1992; by 2000, the county had the second-highest percentage in the metro area (49.9 percent), second only to Harford County (50.9 percent). Disturbingly, of the six jurisdictions within the metro area, only Baltimore County has over time shown an *increase* in the percentage of high schoolers regularly drinking: an increase of 2.3 percent from 1992 to 2000. All the other jurisdictions witnessed *decreases* in regular drinking by

Comparing responses from 1992 through 2000, the good news is that there has been a significant decrease in the percentage of 6th graders who report using beer and wine.

Table 16

**Self-Reported Intoxicant Use by County and Year, 1992-1998:
Percentage of 12th Graders Having Used Beer and Wine, Ever**

| Jurisdiction | 1992 | 1994 | 1996 | 1998 | 2000 | +/- % |
|-------------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|--------------|
| Baltimore Co. | 86.1 | 78.1 | 80.6 | 77.0 | 79.1 | -8.1% |
| Baltimore City | 74.8 | 63.0 | 60.9 | 51.0 | 54.1 | -27.7% |
| Anne Arundel Co. | 86.3 | 82.3 | 79.1 | 81.6 | 79.5 | -7.9% |
| Carroll Co. | 82.7 | 78.8 | 76.9 | 73.0 | 72.5 | -12.3% |
| Harford Co. | 90.6 | 79.3 | 77.6 | 71.5 | 79.5 | -12.3% |
| Howard Co. | 82.9 | 74.9 | 76.4 | 66.8 | 68.9 | -16.9% |
| Maryland Statewide | 83.2 | 76.3 | 75.0 | 69.2 | 69.8 | -16.1% |
| Metro Regional Average* | 83.9 | 76.1 | 75.2 | 70.1 | 72.3 | -13.8% |

* The "metro regional" figures are averages of all the county data for each year and are not directly comparable the county or statewide data.

Source: MSDE 1993a, 1995a, 1997a, 2000a and 2001b.

12th graders, anywhere from about 10 percent (Harford County) to 50 percent (Baltimore City).

During each of the test years from 1992 to 2000, other than in 1992, the percentage of Baltimore County high-school seniors reporting beer/wine use within the previous 30 days surpassed the statewide corresponding figure. While the statewide percentage of 12th graders reporting regular drinking has decreased 17.2 percent over eight years, the percentage in the county has increased 2.3 percent.

Nonetheless, in Baltimore County, there has been a decrease in the percentage of 12th graders reporting ever having consumed alcohol, from 86.1 percent in 1992 to 79.1 percent in 2000 (table 16). Better yet, in 2000, of those 12th graders who had ever used beer and wine, 63.1 percent had partaken within the previous 30 days. By contrast, in 1992, 87.6 percent of those who had ever drunk had done so during the previous month. Nonetheless, despite this positive news, drinking among high schoolers, whether regularly or occasionally, has remained consistently higher than the prevailing statewide rate.

One positive trend is that, overall, each of the six jurisdictions in the metro area has experienced a decrease in self-reported use of alcohol by 12th graders. However, Baltimore County's percentage remains (at 79.1 percent) the third-highest in the area, next only to Anne Arundel County and

Harford County (tied for first place with 79.5 percent each). From 1992 through 2000, Baltimore County reported a 8.1 percent decline in 12th-grade beer and wine use. This was the second-smallest decrease in the area, with only Anne Arundel County witnessing a slighter reduction (7.9 percent).

4.C.7.3. Drug Taking Among Sixth Graders: Our analysis of usage of illicit drugs by school children can only span the years 1994 through 2000 as, prior to that, the MSDE reported figures on the use of individual drugs (heroin, cocaine, etc.) but presented no aggregate figure for all illicit drugs.

In 2000, 3.5 of 6th graders in Baltimore County admitted to having taken one or more controlled substances within the previous 30 days. (See table 17.) The county was the second-lowest among the six metro jurisdictions in this respect, behind all other counties save Baltimore City, only 2.9 percent of whose 6th graders admitted such drug usage. The statewide figure was 4.5 percent. Additionally, over six years, the county's rate of positive-response giving among respondents dropped 49.3 percent, behind only Baltimore City, with a 55.4 percent drop. Interestingly, and indicating what a difference a few years can make, Baltimore County and Baltimore City in 1994 had, respectively, the second- and third-highest reported use of recent drug use by 6th graders (6.9 percent in Baltimore County and 6.5



Table 17

**Self-Reported Intoxicant Use by County and Year, 1992-1998:
Percentage of 6th Graders Having Used Drugs Other than Alcohol and Cigarettes, within Previous 30 Days**

| Jurisdiction | 1992 | 1994 | 1996 | 1998 | 2000 | +/- % |
|-------------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|--------------|
| Baltimore Co. | N/a | 6.9 | 5.3 | 3.1 | 3.5 | -49.3% |
| Baltimore City | N/a | 6.5 | 5.9 | 7.7 | 2.9 | -55.4% |
| Anne Arundel Co. | N/a | 6.1 | 4.9 | 4.9 | 8.2 | 34.4% |
| Carroll Co. | N/a | 3.8 | 1.2 | 3.5 | 3.7 | -2.6% |
| Harford Co. | N/a | 5.1 | 2.9 | 2.3 | 6.7 | 31.4% |
| Howard Co. | N/a | 7.5 | 3.1 | 1.7 | 4.9 | -34.7% |
| Maryland Statewide | 5.6 | 5.9 | 4.0 | 5.2 | 4.5 | -19.6% |
| Metro Regional Average* | N/a | 6.0 | 3.9 | 3.9 | 5.0 | -16.7% |

* The "metro regional" figures are averages of all the county data for each year and are not directly comparable the county or statewide data.

Source: MSDE 1993a, 1995a, 1997a, 2000a and 2001b.

Table 18

**Self-Reported Intoxicant Use by County and Year, 1992-1998:
Percentage of 6th Graders Having Used Drugs Other than Alcohol and Cigarettes, Ever**

| Jurisdiction | 1992 | 1994 | 1996 | 1998 | 2000 | +/- % |
|-------------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|--------------|
| Baltimore Co. | N/a | 9.6 | 7.1 | 8.1 | 8.5 | -11.5% |
| Baltimore City | N/a | 11.3 | 9.9 | 11.8 | 8.0 | -29.2% |
| Anne Arundel Co. | N/a | 9.1 | 7.9 | 7.8 | 14.4 | 58.2% |
| Carroll Co. | N/a | 6.1 | 3.7 | 5.9 | 6.1 | 0.0% |
| Harford Co. | N/a | 9.5 | 4.5 | 3.3 | 10.9 | 14.7% |
| Howard Co. | N/a | 11.4 | 4.6 | 6.9 | 8.7 | -23.7% |
| Maryland Statewide | 9.2 | 9.4 | 6.1 | 8.9 | 9.7 | 5.4% |
| Metro Regional Average* | N/a | 9.5 | 6.3 | 7.3 | 9.4 | -1.0% |

* The "metro regional" figures are averages of all the county data for each year and are not directly comparable the county or statewide data.

Source: MSDE 1993a, 1995a, 1997a, 2000a and 2001b.

percent in Baltimore City).

Within the larger group of occasional users, Baltimore County's record is reasonably good, too, as shown on table 18. There has been a decline of 11.5 percent in the proportion of coun-

ty 6th graders reporting ever having taken drugs. True, three jurisdictions in the area have experienced a greater decline, but, there again, two have seen no decline at all (Carroll and Harford counties, with the latter, indeed, having experienced an



Table 19

Self-Reported Intoxicant Use by County and Year, 1992-1998:
Percentage of 12th Graders Having Used Drugs Other than Alcohol and Cigarettes, within Previous 30 Days

| Jurisdiction | 1992 | 1994 | 1996 | 1998 | 2000 | +/- % |
|-------------------------|------|------|------|------|------|--------|
| Baltimore Co. | N/a | 28.8 | 35.6 | 33.8 | 34.6 | 20.1% |
| Baltimore City | N/a | 23.6 | 17.6 | 19.2 | 18.7 | -20.8% |
| Anne Arundel Co. | N/a | 33.7 | 29.7 | 37.4 | 29.9 | -11.3% |
| Carroll Co. | N/a | 34.2 | 22.9 | 27.0 | 31.1 | -9.0% |
| Harford Co. | N/a | 28.9 | 36.7 | 31.3 | 35.1 | 21.4% |
| Howard Co. | N/a | 32.6 | 32.0 | 22.4 | 24.4 | -25.1% |
| Maryland Statewide | 21.8 | 29.9 | 31.2 | 28.1 | 28.2 | 29.4% |
| Metro Regional Average* | N/a | 30.3 | 29.1 | 28.5 | 29.0 | -4.3% |

* The "metro regional" figures are averages of all the county data for each year and are not directly comparable the county or statewide data.

Source: MSDE 1993a, 1995a, 1997a, 2000a and 2001b.

increase).

Additionally, the proportion of regular users among all users appears to be decreasing. In 1992, regular users made up 71.9 percent of all users. By 2000, this proportion had declined to 41.2 percent.

4.C.7.4. Drug Taking Among 12th Graders: A more alarming picture emerges when one analyses 12th graders' drug use. In 2000, well over a third of Baltimore County 12th graders reported drug taking within the previous month. In this, the county was surpassed only by Harford County (37.4 percent). All the other metro counties came in lower, significantly so in the case of the city (18.7 percent). The statewide figure for 2000 was 28.2 percent. It is disturbing that, in 1994, Baltimore County ranked second-bottom on the drug "league table"; now it ranks second-top. From 1994 through 2000, four metro jurisdictions experienced a decrease in regular drug usage among 12th graders and two experienced an increased. Baltimore County was one of the latter.

Expanding the analysis to include even once-only drug use does not improve matters much. In 2000, three fifths of all Baltimore County high school seniors said they had used drugs at some point or another. This was a higher proportion than in all the metro area jurisdictions except Harford County, and higher also than the statewide figure (51.5 percent). The trend is not encouraging. From 1994 to 2000,

three metro jurisdictions saw an increase in overall 12th-grade drug use. Baltimore County was one of these, with an increase of 20.4 percent over these six years (the other two were Carroll County, 1.8 percent, and Harford County, 31.7 percent).

In 1994, 57.6 percent of all 12th-grade drug users could be described as recent (i.e., frequent) users. This compared to an almost identical 57.5 percent in 2000.

As an aside, it may be informative at this point to add some national data to the equation. The U.S. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) periodically conducts a survey of drug use among American households. Unfortunately, SAMHSA's data are not quite comparable to our own. SAMHSA uses age ranges to divide its respondents demographically, while we and the MSDE use specific school grades as a divider. Nonetheless, particularly for alcohol use, SAMHSA's ranges are sufficiently narrow as to permit a useful, though not perfect, comparison.

At the national level, in 1998, 14.4 percent of 12- and 13-year-olds reported having

In 2000, 3.5 percent of county 6th graders admitted to having taken one or more controlled substances within the previous 30 days.



Table 20

**Self-Reported Intoxicant Use by County and Year, 1992-1998:
Percentage of 12th Graders Having Used Drugs Other than Alcohol and Cigarettes, Ever**

| Jurisdiction | 1992 | 1994 | 1996 | 1998 | 2000 | +/- % |
|-------------------------|------|------|------|------|------|-------|
| Baltimore Co. | N/a | 50.0 | 56.6 | 50.5 | 60.2 | 20.4% |
| Baltimore City | N/a | 41.1 | 36.6 | 39.0 | 40.9 | -0.5% |
| Anne Arundel Co. | N/a | 57.2 | 51.1 | 61.7 | 55.6 | -2.8% |
| Carroll Co. | N/a | 51.2 | 44.8 | 48.4 | 52.1 | 1.8% |
| Harford Co. | N/a | 47.0 | 57.0 | 46.5 | 61.9 | 31.7% |
| Howard Co. | N/a | 47.0 | 55.3 | 43.7 | 45.7 | -2.8% |
| Maryland Statewide | 50.0 | 48.1 | 51.5 | 48.8 | 51.5 | 3.0% |
| Metro Regional Average* | N/a | 48.9 | 50.2 | 48.2 | 52.7 | 7.8% |

* The "metro regional" figures are averages of all the county data for each year and are not directly comparable the county or statewide data.

Source: MSDE 1993a, 1995a, 1997a, 2000a and 2001b.

drunk at some point ever; 4.9 percent confessed to having drunk within the previous month (SAMHSA 2000:98). Glancing back to tables 13 and 14, we see that the nearest corresponding figures for Baltimore County in 1998 were that 13.7 percent of 6th graders professed have drunk at least once, and that 6.0 percent said they had done so within the previous 30 days.

Again for 1998, SAMHSA reports that 78.1 percent of 18-to-20-year-olds say they have drunk at least once, while 53.3 percent say they have done so recently (SAMHSA 2000:98). The approximate county comparison is that 77.0 percent of 12th graders admit to use at some point, while 55.5 percent admit to use within the previous month.

As for drug taking, comparisons with SAMHSA data are less satisfying because SAMHSA's classifying age brackets for drug taking are broader. SAMHSA's nearest classification to our 6th grade group is a 12-17 age group, which we do not consider close enough to warrant analysis. However,

In 2000, three fifths of Baltimore County high school seniors said they had used drugs at some point or another. This was a higher proportion than all the metro area jurisdictions save one.

SAMHSA's 18-25 age group is, very broadly speaking, comparable to our 12th grade group, mostly made up of 18-year-olds. Nationally, 48.1 percent of 18-to-25-year-olds have tried one or more illicit drugs at least once (SAMHSA 2000:28), as against 50.5 percent of Baltimore County 12th graders. For recent users, nationally 16.1 percent of the 18-25 age group have tried drugs within the previous month (SAMHSA 2000:30). In Baltimore County, 33.8 percent of 12th graders have done so. We find it disturbing indeed that for both occasional use and frequent use, Baltimore County 12th graders outscore their national peers, despite the fact of the latter's being drawn from a far wider age bracket (eight years inclusive, as opposed to one).



Chapter 5: Public Opinion

The second vital component of this study was the public-opinion survey. Essentially, the purpose of the poll was to test the salience with the public of each of the indicators identified by the LMB's standing committees (that is, the indicators analyzed in chapter 4). We wished to examine the degree to which there was any correspondence between (a) the seriousness of a given issue as revealed by our statistics and (b) the importance the public attributed to that same issue. As explained in chapter 2, this would then, broadly speaking, allow us to categorize each issue as (a) statistically important and publicly important, (b) statistically important but not publicly important, (c) publicly important but not statistically important, or (d) neither publicly important nor statistically important. This information in turn would assist county personnel in decisions regarding the assigning of funds, time and employees to the issues.

We contracted with Gonzales/Arscott Research & Communications, Inc. to conduct the poll. In consultation with LMB staff and with the Gonzales/Arscott, questions were drafted by InterGroup Services, the consulting company. In addition to various demographic and screening questions, the survey contained 15 questions relating to the preselected indicators and one open-ended question, designed to allow each respondent to volunteer one issue he or she considered to be important but not covered by the menu of issues presented in questions 1 through 15. As noted in chapter 2, the reason for giving respondents a menu of issues, rather than allowing them to propose their own issues, was to reduce the amount of "venting" and to reduce the number of answers relating to matters the county would be unable to address anyway. We were also concerned that, given no menu of issues, respondents unable to think of issues on the spur of the moment might simply make something up just to satisfy the poll taker.

Gonzales/Arscott conducted the poll between September 28 and October 3, 2001. All told, 304 households were successfully interviewed, giving a margin of error of six percentage points, plus or minus. Basic criteria for inclusion in the poll were simple: a participating household had to reside in Baltimore County and it had to have at least one child under 21 living at home. Of the 304 households, 41.1 percent said they had at some point or another used county child-related services (in addition to the public schools and the public library).

Other than in terms of income, the demo-

graphic breakdown of the respondents corresponded closely with known Baltimore County demographics, giving us every reason to suppose that the sample was reasonably representative of the county. We found 47.7 percent of our respondents to be male and 52.3 percent female; we know from the Census Bureau that the county is 47.4 percent male and 52.6 percent female (BC 2001a:4). Males and females claimed about the same rate of household usage of county services: 41.4 percent for men and 40.9 percent for females.

Our respondents were 78.3 percent white, 19.1 percent African-American and 2.3 percent other races, with 0.3 percent declining to respond. This was close to the county's racial breakdown according to the census, though not identical. The census reports Baltimore County to be 74.4 percent white, 20.1 percent African-American and 5.2 percent all other races. Our poll therefore slightly overstates white opinion and fractionally understates black opinion. Because of their small numbers, just seven people in all, results from respondents of other races have not been analyzed for the purposes of differentiating viewpoints by race. Black respondents were slightly more likely than white ones to be users of county child-related services, 44.8 percent compared to 40.3 percent (and we have not analyzed the figure for the seven "other race" respondents).

Confirming what has already been stated in chapter 2 about the concentration of the county's population in the area around Baltimore City, we found that 37.5 percent of respondents reported living within the I-695 beltway, an area encompassing perhaps 15 percent of the county's land mass, if that. Another 61.5 percent said they lived outside the beltway, and 1.0 percent either did not know or declined to answer. Respondents living outside the beltway were considerably more likely to be users of county services for children than those living inside the beltway. Just under 45 percent of the outside-the-beltway group (44.9 percent) claimed to be service users, as against 35.1 percent on the inside-the-beltway residents.

Overall, our respondents were a reasonably affluent group, disproportionately so, indeed. In 1999, Baltimore County's median household income was \$51,700 (DOP 2000d), meaning that half of the county's households had income above that figure and half below it. Our survey data were gathered in a manner that has not allowed us to calculate our responding households' median income. We asked respondents to select the income range that best described their household income, the ranges in



question being: \$10,000 or less; \$10,001 to 25,000; \$25,001 to 50,000; \$50,001 to \$75,000; and \$75,001 and above. Though arguably a little low for a wealthy state such as Maryland, \$75,000 was selected as the cutoff for the top income bracket (a) because to have selected a higher figure would have made the second-highest bracket very large and (b) because in 1998, nationally, \$75,000 happened to be the cutoff for those in the 80th percentile of earnings (BC 2000). That is, according to the Census Bureau, in 1998, to be in the top 20 percent of earners, one had to have earned \$75,000 or more as a household (1998 is the census' most recent year for income distribution percentile figures). Though we cannot know our respondents' median income, a cursory glance will tell the reader that \$50,000 is fairly close to the county median figure of \$51,700. Therefore, we would have expected to find about or just under half our respondents falling within the first three income ranges (zero to \$50,000) and about or slightly over half in the top two ranges (\$50,001 and up).

In fact, 64.1 percent of respondents (195 households) reported income above \$50,000. Only 24.7 percent (75 households) gave an income figure of

Confirming what has already been stated about the concentration of the county's population, we found that 37.5 percent of respondents reported living within the I-695 beltway.

under \$50,000. A further 11.2 percent declined to answer. Even if one assigns all the non-answering respondents to the under-\$50,000 group, this still only gives us 35.9 percent. One may only speculate as to the reasons for the underrepresentation of lower-income earners. Very low-end earners,

such as those earning under \$10,000 a year, may be less likely to have telephones. Additionally, for households earning under \$50,000 a year, there may be a greater reliance upon the sort of employment requiring evening and weekend shifts, reducing the likelihood of such respondents' being home to answer a pollster's call. Alternatively, because a random poll does not guarantee a perfect distribution, simple chance may be the explanation. Regardless of the reason, the reader should bear in mind that this survey's respondent pool is rather overpopulated with above-average earners.

Because the income bands toward the bottom of the selection of presented options had few

respondents (only five, in the case of the \$10,000-or-less bracket, too few to be meaningful), we have for the purposes of this report collapsed the five brackets into two: (a) zero to \$50,000, which we term "lower-end earners" (the lower three bands); and (b) \$50,001 and above, which we term "upper-end earners" (the upper two bands). Broadly speaking, these terms may be thought of as more or less corresponding to families below the county's median income and those above the median income, respectively. Lower-end earners were notably more likely to be service users than upper-end earners: 49.3 percent as opposed to 37.4 percent.

Finally, respondents were asked to describe their household structure, one parent or two parent — in short, they were asked if they were single parents. The breakdown among respondents was as follows: 78.6 percent reported being part of a two-parent household; 18.8 said they were single parents; and 2.6 reported some "other," unspecified arrangement. This corresponds reasonably well — but no more than reasonably well — with what we know from the Census Bureau. For 2000, the census reported that there were 90,711 households in the county with children under 18 at home. Of these, 63,107 or 69.6 percent were two-parent families with natural children present (not adoptees or foster children). And 21,690 or 23.9 percent were households headed by a sole female with natural children (BC 2001a:4). Obviously, the Census Bureau's classifications are narrower than ours. By comparison, our survey (a) allowed children through age 20; (b) did not specify that the children had to be natural children; and (c) included those headed by single fathers as part of its definition of a single-parent household. Even assuming that our survey's relatively large proportion of two-parent households can in part be explained by the inclusion of adoptive families excluded from the census figure, it still is probable that our poll slightly inflates the views of dual-parent families and underweighs those of single-parent households, a fact which the reader should be cognizant of.

The reason for asking this question was that we hypothesized that single-parent households might have cause to use county social services more frequently than two-parent families, perhaps causing them to form opinions differing from those of two-parent households as to the relative strengths and weaknesses of various programs. The hypothesis was only partially borne out for, in fact, one-parent households were only slightly more likely to be users of county child-related services than two-parent households: 43.9 percent versus 40.9 percent.



Table 21

**Relative Importance of Indicators:
Respondents' Rank Ordering**

| Rank | Issue and Description | Overall Issue Score (out of Possible 10) | “Don’t Know” Rate (as a Percentage) |
|------|--|---|--|
| 1. | Drinking by teenagers | 7.16 | 5.3% |
| 2. | Drug abuse by teenagers | 6.97 | 3.0% |
| 3. | Accidental death rate among teenagers | 6.01 | 3.0% |
| 4. | Property-crime rate among teenagers | 5.70 | 4.9% |
| 5. | Teenage pregnancy and childbearing | 5.48 | 4.3% |
| 6. | Student suspensions | 5.38 | 9.9% |
| 7. | Child abuse and neglect | 5.36 | 6.2% |
| 8. | Domestic violence | 5.23 | 7.9% |
| 9. | Chronic absenteeism | 5.19 | 12.5% |
| 10. | Violent-crime rate among teenagers | 4.72 | 4.3% |
| 11. | Readiness to learn, as measured by WSS | 4.45 | 5.3% |
| 12. | Readiness to learn, as measured by 3rd grade MSPAP scores | 4.35 | 23.0% |
| 13. | Readiness to learn, as measured by rate of kindergarten experience | 4.23 | 10.9% |
| 14. | Low birth-weight baby rate | 3.84 | 18.7% |
| 15. | Infant mortality rate | 3.08 | 21.4% |

For each question, respondents were asked to score the indicator’s importance from 1 to 10, with 1 meaning “no problem” and 10 meaning “enormous problem.” This method allowed us to construct an ordering of the issues ranked from most important to least important, at least as far as the respondents were concerned. The list is shown in table 21. The first thing to note is that only three issues were, overall, of more than “moderate concern,” the term Gonzalez/Arcott used to describe a score of 5. Very few respondents described anything as being of “enormous concern,” which would have merited a score of 10. Only two indicators stand out in this regard: teenage drinking and teenage drug abuse, which were categorized as “enormous” problems by 11.5 percent and 10.2 percent of respondents, respectively. The rate of accidental deaths among teens was considered to be an “enormous” problem by 8.6 percent of the public.

In table 22, we have cross-tabulated the “public importance” of each issue with its “statistical importance.” The y axis represents the public’s concern, from low to high; and the x axis, the statistical concern represented by each issue, from low to high. Thus, the top row contains the issues of

most importance to the public; the middle row, the issues of some concern; and the lowest row, the issues of relatively little concern to the public. Likewise, the right column contains the issues that concerned us most statistically; the middle column, those that somewhat concerned us; and the left column, those about which we were not particularly worried, statistically speaking. The three cells extending from bottom left to top right of the chart show the issues where the public’s level of concern was largely in accordance with our statistical analysis.

We do not claim this tabulation to have been all that scientific an exercise. As far the public importance of an issue was concerned, any issue scoring 6 or above was labeled as being of “high” importance; any scoring 5, of “medium” importance; and any scoring below 5, of “low” importance. As for our assigning of

**For each question,
respondents were asked to
score the indicator’s
importance from 1 to 10,
with 1 meaning “no
problem” and 10 meaning
“enormous problem.”**

Table 23

**Relative Importance of Indicators:
Percentage of Respondents Attributing "Reasonable Importance" to Issues by Demographic Type**

| | Inside B-way | Outside B-way | Lower Earner | Upper Earner | Race Black | Race White | Gender Male | Gender Female | Dual Parent | Single Parent |
|--|---------------------|----------------------|---------------------|---------------------|-------------------|-------------------|--------------------|----------------------|--------------------|----------------------|
| 1. Drinking by teenagers | 74.6% | 77.0% | 76.0% | 75.9% | 70.7% | 76.9% | 74.5% | 77.4% | 74.5% | 82.5% |
| 2. Drug abuse by teenagers | 75.4% | 71.7% | 65.3% | 76.9% | 70.7% | 73.9% | 69.7% | 76.1% | 73.2% | 70.2% |
| 3. Accidental death rate among teenagers | 64.0% | 56.1% | 58.7% | 59.5% | 58.6% | 58.4% | 53.1% | 64.1% | 60.2% | 54.2% |
| 4. Property-crime rate among teenagers | 58.8% | 48.1% | 61.3% | 48.7% | 58.6% | 49.2% | 51.0% | 52.2% | 53.6% | 40.3% |
| 5. Teenage pregnancy and child bearing | 40.3% | 44.4% | 52.0% | 40.5% | 43.1% | 42.4% | 31.0% | 53.4% | 42.7% | 43.8% |
| 6. Student suspensions | 45.6% | 44.9% | 53.3% | 41.5% | 55.2% | 42.4% | 40.7% | 49.1% | 45.6% | 42.1% |
| 7. Child abuse and neglect | 51.0% | 36.4% | 53.3% | 34.4% | 55.2% | 35.7% | 37.2% | 41.5% | 37.7% | 45.6% |
| 8. Domestic violence | 42.1% | 35.3% | 52.0% | 32.3% | 51.7% | 34.0% | 35.2% | 40.9% | 36.0% | 45.6% |
| 9. Chronic absenteeism | 36.0% | 38.0% | 41.3% | 34.9% | 37.9% | 36.6% | 33.8% | 39.6% | 37.2% | 36.6% |
| 10. Violent-crime rate among teenagers | 39.5% | 33.2% | 37.3% | 34.9% | 44.8% | 32.4% | 36.6% | 34.0% | 36.0% | 33.3% |
| 11. Readiness to learn, as measured by WSS | 24.6% | 28.9% | 29.3% | 28.7% | 37.9% | 24.8% | 24.1% | 30.8% | 23.4% | 43.8% |
| 12. Readiness to learn, as measured by 3rd grade MSPAP scores | 23.7% | 18.7% | 18.7% | 22.0% | 20.7% | 20.2% | 20.0% | 21.4% | 19.7% | 26.3% |
| 13. Readiness to learn, as measured by rate of kindergarten experience | 28.1% | 21.4% | 17.3% | 23.6% | 32.8% | 22.3% | 20.0% | 27.7% | 23.0% | 26.3% |
| 14. Low birth-weight baby rate | 21.0% | 12.3% | 22.7% | 12.3% | 31.0% | 11.8% | 17.9% | 13.2% | 13.4% | 22.8% |
| 15. Infant mortality rate | 13.2% | 6.9% | 14.7% | 6.7% | 17.2% | 7.6% | 9.7% | 8.8% | 7.9% | 15.8% |

On infant mortality, other than by racial and income breakdown, there were no appreciable differences in viewpoint among demographic subgroups.

which we subsequently called “limited importance.” And we collapsed the brackets 6 through 10 into a single classification we called “reasonable importance.” This was because the actual number of respondents for any single one of the old 1-to-10 brackets for any given question was often too small for the purposes of analysis. (For example, only one single parent ranked infant mortality as a “6” in importance, and only one inside-the-beltway resident gave the issue a “9,” from which one may deduce nothing.) Collapsing the brackets gave workable numbers of respondents for each issue. Using these collapsed brackets, table 23 summarizes the responses to all questions.

5.A. Result 1: Babies Born Healthy

We asked respondents a question relating to each of the three indicators pertaining to the “babies born healthy” result. We knew from our statistical analysis that each was a concern, at least numerically speaking. We wished to ascertain if the public viewed these issues as concerns, too. The answer we received was, in short, that only one was: teen childbearing.

5.A.1. Infant Mortality

Question: I am going to read you a list of issues that have an impact on the quality of life of children and youth. After I read each item, I am going to ask you to rate the degree to which you think each item is a problem specifically in Baltimore County. Rate each item on a scale from 1 to 10, with 1 meaning that it is virtually no problem, and 10 signifying an enormous problem. The first is infant mortality, that is, babies who die before they reach the age of one year. On a scale of 1 to 10, how big a problem is infant mortality in Baltimore County?

Despite the worrying “county snapshot” and trend data associated with this indicator, the poll respondents ranked infant mortality as the least important of the 15 issues they were asked about. Garnering an overall concern score of only 3.08 out of a pos-

assigning scores without involving value judgments, which we wished to avoid.

Finally, for analysis beyond the assigning of issue ranking scores, we collapsed the 1-to-10 public importance scale into two categories, as follows. We collapsed 1 through 5 into a single bracket,

sible 10, infant mortality was only deemed an “enormous” problem by four people (1.3 percent). By contrast, 62 people considered it to be “no problem” at all (20.4 percent). Other than by racial and, to a lesser extent, by income breakdown, there were no appreciable differences in viewpoint among demographic subgroups.

Thus, 67.5 percent of inside-the-beltway residents found infant mortality to be of “limited importance” (our category for the old collapsed categories 1 through 5), as did a fairly similar 70.6 percent of beltway-outsiders. Attaching “reasonable importance” to the issue — that is, attaching scores of 6 through 10 — were 13.2 percent of insiders and 6.9 percent of outsiders. About 20 percent of insiders and outsiders said they did not know or would not answer (19.3 percent, insiders; 22.5 percent, outsiders).

At this juncture, a word is in order about the high “don’t know” response rate for this question (see table 21). We assumed — correctly, as it turned out — that this issue and the low-birth-weight issue would be considered to be rather technical by the public. This, we speculated, would result in a reluctance to answer such a “medical” question. In this assumption, we were proven correct. In all, 21.4 percent of respondents did not answer, whereas most other questions had a “don’t know” (DK) rate in single digits.

Returning to the demographic breakdown of the respondents, males and females were equally dismissive of the importance of infant mortality rates. For men, 71.0 percent rated the issue as being of limited importance, next to 9.7 assigning reasonable importance to the issue. Women were slightly less inclined to dismiss infant mortality as being of limited importance (67.9 percent), but, there again, there were also less likely to assign reasonable importance to it (8.8 percent). The discrepancy is explained by the fact the female respondents were more likely to say they did not have an answer (23.3 percent to 19.3 percent).

As for household structure, single parents were more likely to attribute reasonable importance to the issue (15.8 percent) than were non-single, or “dual,” parents (7.9 percent). On the other hand, over two-thirds of each group dismissed the issue as being of limited importance (69.0 percent, two-parent households; 68.4 percent, one-parent households). The difference is explained by the fact of the two-parent households’ far higher DK rate: 23.0 percent as against 15.8 percent.

We found income to have some influence on respondents’ answers. By and large, lower-end earners were more concerned about infant mor-



tality than upper-end ones, though neither lost any sleep over the issue. Just over one-seventh (14.7 percent) of lower-end earners assigned reasonable importance to the issue, as opposed to a mere 6.7 percent of upper-end earners. The better part of three-quarters of upper-end earners dismissed the issue as being of limited importance (72.3 percent), compared to exactly two-thirds of lower-end earners (66.7 percent).

The greatest respondent cleavage was along racial lines. Only 7.6 percent of whites attributed reasonable importance to infant mortality; among black respondents, however, the figure was 17.2 percent. This is certainly not evidence of overwhelming concern. All the same, of all the demographic subgroups analyzed (upper-end earner, lower-end earner, male, female, etc.), African-Americans exhibited the highest concern for this issue. Three blacks, representing 5.2 percent of that subgroup's respondent pool, gave infant mortality a "10" in importance, next to only one white, representing 0.4 percent of that pool. Over seventy percent of whites (72.3 percent) gave the issue a 1-5 "limited importance" score, while only 60.3 percent of black households did so.

5.A.2. Low Birth Weights

Question: The next issue is low-birth-weight babies, that is, babies born weighing less than 5 pounds. On a scale of 1 to 10, how big a problem are low-birth-weight babies in Baltimore County?

The responses relating to low birth weights among Baltimore County newborns displayed many of the same characteristics as those concerning infant mortality. For a start, a high proportion of respondents — 18.7 percent — gave no answer to this question. And overall this issue did not resonate with the public. Scoring 3.84 out of 10, this was the public's second-least important issue. Only four people in total considered this to be an enormous problem. Nonetheless, there were important difference between the response patterns for this question and the patterns for the infant-mortality question.

As with infant mortality, about twice as many beltway-insiders as beltway-outsiders considered this to be of reasonable importance. Whereas 12.3 percent of outsiders called this issue reasonably important, 21.0 percent of inside-the-beltway residents did. This said, approximately two-thirds of both groups defined the issue as being of limited importance: 62.3 percent of insiders and 67.9 percent of outsiders.

Lower-end earners were also about twice as likely as upper-end earners to attach some importance to this issue: 22.7 percent versus 12.3 per-

cent. Lower-end earners were also markedly less likely to dismiss the low-birth-weight (LBW) baby matter as being of limited importance; they were also more likely to answer the question with a "don't know." While 70.8 percent of better-off earners wrote LBW babies off as being of limited concern and while 16.9 percent gave no answer, along lower-end earners the corresponding figures were 54.7 percent and 22.7 percent, respectively.

As with infant mortality, the analysis by race provided the greatest cleavage in viewpoint. African-American respondents were decidedly more likely than white ones to exhibit concern. This should not surprise us: both these issues demonstrate considerable discrepancy by race.

In Baltimore County in 1999, 13.3 percent of black newborns were underweight, compared to just 7.5 percent of white babies. Likewise, in 1999 the county's infant-mortality rate among African-Americans was 13.7 percent; among whites, 5.1 percent (DHMH 2001). Returning to the survey, 31.0 percent of black households thought LBW babies to be of reasonable importance, compared with just 11.8 percent of white households. Five of the seven respondents calling LBW babies enormously important were black. While well over two-thirds of whites (69.7 percent) attached only limited importance to the issue, a far smaller proportion of African-Americans were so sanguine, only 50.0 percent.

The demographic division by gender presented far less of a difference in opinion. For men, 17.9 percent considered this issue to be of reasonable importance. Interestingly, fewer women did so, only 13.2 percent. Just under two-thirds of men (62.8 percent) and just over two-thirds of women (68.5 percent) rated the issue as being of limited importance.

Finally, single parents were more likely than dual parents to be concerned about LBW babies. The dual-parent group was only reasonably concerned to the tune of 13.4 percent, with 66.5 percent exhibiting only limited concern. Among single parents, a rather higher 22.8 percent were reasonably concerned, with 63.2 percent confessing to limited concern. Of the seven respondents giving this issue a "10" in importance, six were single parents.

As with infant mortality, the analysis by race provided the greatest cleavage in viewpoint on the question about low birth weights.



5.A.3. Births to Adolescents

Question: The next issue is teenage motherhood. On a scale of 1 to 10, how big a problem is teenage motherhood in Baltimore County?

The third of our “babies born healthy” questions related to teenage pregnancy and childbearing. In

The third of our “babies born healthy” questions related to teenage pregnancy and childbearing. The issue struck a chord with the public. It was the public’s fifth-most important issue.

contrast to the other two (infant mortality and LBW babies), the issue of teen childbearing struck something of a chord with the public. Indeed, this was the public’s fifth most important issue, scoring 5.48 out of 10 overall. The opinion cleavages were different. The divisions were not by race but by income and sex.

Respondents’ place of residence made little difference to their answers to this question. Beltway-insiders were slightly less likely to consider this issue to be of some importance than were beltway-outsiders: 40.3 percent of them found it reasonably important, while 55.3 percent attributed limited importance. Among outsiders, the figures were 44.4 percent and 51.3 percent, respectively.

Race played a similarly unimportant role in people’s views on this matter. Among whites, 42.4 ascribed reasonable importance and 53.4 percent limited importance. Among blacks, the figures were, respectively, 43.1 percent and 51.7 percent.

As we noted in chapter 4, teen mothers are considerably more likely to be single mothers than are older mothers. Despite this, there was very little difference in opinion among single- and dual-parent respondents: 42.7 percent reasonable concern among dual parents; 43.8 percent among single parents.

The real divisions were class and gender based. Lower-end earners were far more likely to be concerned about teen pregnancy than upper-end earners. Among the better off, 40.2 percent thought this issue merited reasonable concern, with 4.1 percent rating it an enormous concern. And 55.4 percent only considered it to be of limited concern. Among lower-end earners, these figures were reversed. Fifty-two percent thought teen pregnancy to be of reasonable concern, and 9.3 percent were enormously concerned. Only 42.7 percent were insouciant enough to score the issue from 1 to 5, for a limited concern.

There was an even greater opinion cleavage

when respondents were broken down by sex. Over half of women were reasonably concerned about this issue (53.4 percent), though not even one-third of men were (31.0 percent). For women, 7.5 percent were enormously concerned, next to just 3.4 percent of men. Well under half of all women found the issue to be of limited importance (42.8 percent), as against almost two-thirds of men (63.4 percent). While only 3.1 percent of female respondents found teen pregnancy to be no problem at all (a “1” score), no fewer than 7.6 percent of men did.

5.B. Result 2: Children Enter School Ready to Learn

In chapter 4, we discussed the difficulties we had in selecting indicators to measure children’s readiness to learn. The only direct measure, the Work Sampling System, is new to Maryland and thus has no trend data associated with it. The other two indicators — kindergarten experience among 1st graders and 3rd grade MSPAP reading scores — are proxy measures. Proxy or not, we believe they provide useful information of children’s school readiness.

5.B.1. Work Sampling System

Question: The next issue is preschoolers entering kindergarten who are not considered “ready to learn.” On a scale of 1 to 10, how big a problem is preschoolers’ readiness to learn in Baltimore County?

We were concerned that mention of the Work Sampling System in the question might intimidate respondents — who were unlikely ever to have heard of WSS — into a high DK rate, which we wished to avoid. Thus, we did not mention the trade-marked measuring tool in the actual question. By and large, respondents were not particularly troubled by county youngsters’ readiness to learn. Learning readiness ranked eleventh out of 15 issues as far as the public was concerned. There were no opinion cleavages by place of residence or by income, some cleavage by race and gender, and a large cleavage by household status (i.e., single or dual parent).

Only about a quarter of respondents considered learning readiness to be a reasonable concern: slightly fewer in the case of beltway-insiders (24.6 percent) and slightly more in the case of beltway-outsiders (28.9 percent). There was a similarly small discrepancy when the figures were broken down by income: 29.3 percent of lower-end earners were reasonably concerned, as were 28.7 percent of upper-end earners. The lower-income group was somewhat more likely not to have an opinion: 8.0 percent as



against 3.5 percent. Just over three-fifths of lower-end earners expressed only limited concern (61.3 percent); over two-thirds of upper-end earners were similarly unconcerned (67.7 percent).

Women were rather more likely than men to express an interest in this issue. More than three in ten called themselves reasonably concerned (30.8 percent); among men, the figure was only 24.1 percent.

The racial cleavage was greater still. African-American respondents were considerably more likely to offer a positive response to this question. While under a quarter of white respondents appeared reasonably concerned by county children's learning readiness (24.8 percent), well over one-third of black respondents were this concerned, 37.9 percent to be exact. Also, 70.6 percent of whites professed to have only limited concern, next to just 55.2 percent of blacks.

The greatest cleavage of all was along the household-status line. Single parents were almost twice as likely to show reasonable concern for children's learning readiness as dual parents. Fewer than a quarter of dual-parent households were thus concerned, 23.4 percent. This compared to 43.8 percent of single parents. The DK rate for both groups was nearly identical: 5.4 percent for dual parents and 5.3 percent for single parents. Just over half of single parents had only limited concern (50.9 percent) versus the better part of three-quarters of dual parents (71.1 percent).

5.B.2. Kindergarten Experience

Question: The next issue is that not all children attend kindergarten, and may be less prepared to enter 1st grade than children who have had the kindergarten experience. On a scale of 1 to 10, how big a problem is the lack of kindergarten participation in Baltimore County?

Interestingly, the question pertaining to learning readiness as measured by kindergarten experience did not produce quite the same response patterns as the previous question. Overall, the issue was ranked as being even less important than that relating to learning readiness: 4.23 out of 10, ranking the issue thirteenth out of 15 indicators.

While beltway outsiders were slightly more concerned about readiness to learn as measured in the previous question than were beltway-insiders (28.9 percent to 24.6 percent), the reverse held true on this question. In this case, only 21.4 percent of outsiders considered county children's kindergarten experience, or the lack thereof, to be of reason-

able concern, compared to 28.1 percent of insiders. Beltway insiders were far more likely to give a DK answer than outsiders: 16.7 percent, next to 7.5 percent. Among insiders, 55.3 percent expressed limited concern; among outsiders, 71.1 percent.

Upper-end earners were somewhat more likely to be reasonably concerned about kindergarten experience than lower-end earners: 23.6 percent were reasonably concerned, compared with 17.3 percent of lower-end earners (this had not been the case with the previous measure of learning readiness, for which the lower-end earners were slightly more concerned, 29.3 percent to 28.7 percent). The fact that upper-end earners were the more concerned is interesting in itself. On only four of 15 indicators were the wealthier respondents more concerned than the less financially stable (the other three issues were teen drug use, teen accidental deaths, and readiness to learn as measured by 3rd grade MSPAP scores). Approximately two-thirds of both groups showed only limited concern for this issue (66.7 percent, lower-end earners; 68.7 percent upper-end earners). Lower-end earners were twice as likely not to answer: 16.0 percent compared to 7.7 percent.

Black respondents were more likely than white ones to express some concern about kindergarten experience: about a third of them (32.8 percent), as opposed to a little over a fifth of whites (22.3 percent). Somewhat over half of African-Americans showed only limited concern (55.2 percent), while two-thirds of whites did (66.8 percent). This racial division represented the biggest cleavage on this issue.

There was also something of a cleavage, though not as much of one, when the figures were parsed by gender. One in five men expressed reasonable concern about kindergarten (20.0 percent). Among women, the response was a higher 27.7 percent. Almost twice as many women as men did not have an opinion, 13.2 percent as against 8.3 percent. The better part of three-quarters of men (71.7 percent) showed only limited concern, compared to 59.1 percent of females.

Though the previous question revealed a large cleavage by household status, this division was not replicated in this question on kindergarten status. In this case, single parents were only slightly more concerned than dual

By and large, respondents were not particularly troubled by county youngsters' readiness to learn. The issue ranked 11 of 15.



parents about learning readiness as measured by kindergarten experience: 26.3 percent to 23.0 percent.

5.B.C. Third Grade MSPAP Scores

Question: Some people believe that Maryland School Performance Assessment Program or MSPAP scores for 3rd graders are directly related to how well prepared children were to enter school in the 1st grade. On a scale of 1 to 10, tell me to what degree you think 3rd grade MSPAP scores in Baltimore County are a reflection of students' 1st grade readiness to learn two years earlier?

This MSPAP question was our third relating to readiness to learn. The responses were quite similar to the responses to the question about kindergarten experience. There were no real cleavages between subgroups. The most notable thing about this question was its high DK rate. Twenty-three percent of respondents did not give an answer to this question, higher even than the DK rates for the questions about infant mortality and LBW babies. While we were content to

Upper-end earners were more likely to be concerned about kindergarten experience than lower-end earners: 23.6 percent, compared to 17.3 percent.

consider 3rd grade MSPAP reading scores to be a proxy measure of learning readiness two and a half years previously, many among the public did not consider themselves qualified to make this call.

Beltway insiders thought MSPAP scores to be more of a reflection of learning readi-

ness than did outsiders: 23.7 percent of them thought it reasonable measure (that is, gave it a score of 6-10), while only 18.7 percent of outsiders thought so. Upper-end earners were somewhat more likely than lower-end earners to consider these test scores a reasonable reflection learning readiness: 22.0 percent versus 18.7 percent. There was no division at all by race: 20.2 percent of whites and 20.7 percent of blacks thought MSPAP a reasonable learning-readiness measure. Nor was there much difference by gender: 20.0 percent of men and 21.4 percent of women. Such demographic division as there was — and there was not much — was to be found along the household-status fault: 26.3 percent of single parents considered MSPAP a reasonable measure, compared to 19.7 percent of dual parents.

5.C. Result 3: Children Safe in their Families and Communities

Our third selected result, “children safe in their families and communities,” had associated with it the largest number of indicators, for the reasons explained in chapter 4. There were seven indicators in all for this result, three of them with sub-indicators.

5.C.1. Domestic Violence

Question: The next issue is domestic violence, that is, violence between spouses or partners. On a scale of 1 to 10, how big a problem is domestic violence in Baltimore County?

As explained in chapter 4, the legal definition of domestic violence extends well beyond violence between spouses and partners. However, interfamily violence remains the popular conception of domestic violence, so the question was framed that way. To have introduced into the question the sort of legalistic terminology described in chapter 4 would, we thought, have considerably confused the issue in respondents' minds. This in turn would probably have resulted in a high proportion of DK answers, which we wished to avoid.

Domestic violence ranked only modestly high on the public's hierarchy of concerns. It was eighth of 13 indicators, with a score of 5.23 out of 10 and a 7.9 percent DK rate. The principal respondent cleavages were along the lines of income and race.

Possibly implying domestic violence to be more of an urban problem than a rural one (or at least a problem thought of thus), 42.1 percent of beltway-insiders considered it a reasonable problem, compared to 35.3 percent of outsiders. About eight percent of both groups did not know or did not answer.

Women are the usual victims of domestic violence, so it is not surprising to find that, generally, female respondents considered the issue to be more serious than did male respondents — though not by much. (Of Maryland's 20,632 domestic-violence incidents in 1999, women were the victims in 75.9 percent of cases [DSP 2000:56].) While 40.9 percent of women thought domestic violence reasonably important, a not dissimilar 35.2 percent of men did also. Likewise, 55.7 percent of men were little concerned by domestic violence, as were almost as many women: 52.2 percent. Men were a little more likely to say they did not know than women, 9.0 percent to 6.9 percent.

There was a more distinct difference of opinion between single parents and dual parents: 45.6 percent of single parents thought this a reasonably important issue, next to 36.0 percent of dual par-



ents. It seems reasonable to speculate that this is the result of relationship instability on the part of single parents. Fewer than half of single parents thought domestic violence to be of limited concern (49.1 percent), compared to 55.2 percent of dual parents.

Black and white respondents were very divergent in their views. Over half of African-American respondents thought this issue to be reasonably important (51.7 percent), compared to scarcely a third of whites (34.0 percent). While the majority of domestic-violence victims in Maryland are white (54.6 percent), blacks are nonetheless represented among the ranks of victims in numbers disproportionate to their presence in the general population. African-Americans make up 27.9 percent of the state population (BC 2001b), but account for 42.7 percent of domestic-violence victims (DSP 2000:56). Getting on for two-thirds of white respondents thought domestic violence to be of limited importance (60.1 percent), while only about one-third of blacks thought so (34.5 percent). At 13.8 percent, blacks were also far more likely not to venture an opinion than whites (5.9 percent).

The biggest cleavage of all was along the lines of income. Fewer than a third of upper-end earners thought of domestic violence as being reasonably important (32.3 percent); this compared to over half of lower-end earners (52.0 percent.) Upper-end earners were twice as likely not to know (8.2 percent, as against 4.0 percent), and, while 44 percent of lower-end earners thought the issue merited only limited concern, about three-fifths of upper-end earners thought so (59.5 percent).

5.C.2. Child Maltreatment

Question: The next issue is child abuse and neglect. On a scale of 1 to 10, how big a problem is child abuse and neglect in Baltimore County?

Scoring 5.36 out of 10, this issue ranked seventh of 15 indicators. As noted previously, the problems of domestic violence and child maltreatment are related. Perhaps not surprisingly, then, the respondents' answer patterns for the child-maltreatment question were very similar to those given for the question on domestic violence. Once again, the greatest issue cleavages were by race and income.

As with domestic violence, inside-the-beltway residents were more concerned about child maltreatment than were beltway-outsiders. On this question, the difference between the two sets of respondents was wider, however. Beltway-outsiders thought this a concern of reasonable magnitude to the tune of 36.4 percent. Beltway-insiders were more

emphatic: 51.0 percent of them thought child maltreatment to be reasonably problematic. Indeed, 7.8 percent of beltway-insiders thought this to be a 10-scoring "enormous problem," compared to only 4.3 percent of outsiders.

The response breakdown by household status was virtually identical to the breakdown for the domestic-violence question. For child maltreatment, 45.6 percent of single parents considered this reasonably problematic, compared to 37.7 percent of dual parents. As with domestic violence, it is likely that the relative prevalence of unstable relationships among single parents is at least in part the cause of their concern. Single and dual parents were about as likely as each other not to respond (7.0 and 6.3 percent, respectively).

As with domestic violence, women were somewhat more concerned about child maltreatment than were men but, again like domestic violence, not much more concerned. Women considered child maltreatment to be reasonably problematic in 41.5 percent of cases, next to 37.2 percent of men. Quite similar proportions of each thought the issue to be of limited importance (55.2 percent of men and 53.5 percent of women). Men were a little more likely to say they did not know than women (7.6 percent to 5.0 percent).

The big divisions were by race and class. Starting with the former, slightly over one-third of whites thought child maltreatment to be of reasonable concern (35.7 percent); in contrast, well over half of African-American respondents thought this to be the case (55.2 percent). Giving the issue a 10-point, "enormous problem" rating were 12.1 percent of black respondents, but only 3.4 percent of whites.

The cleavage by income was of similar magnitude: Only 34.4 percent of upper-end earners expressed reasonable concern about child maltreatment, while 51.7 percent of lower-end earners did so. Three-fifths of upper-end earners thought the issue to be of only limited concern (60.0 percent), compared to only about two-fifths of lower-end earners (41.3 percent).

5.C.3. School Suspensions

Question: The next issue is student disruptiveness. If school suspensions are the measure of student disruptiveness, on a scale of 1 to 10, how big a problem are student suspensions in Baltimore County?

Student suspensions placed fairly high in the public's mind, with a score of 5.38 out of 10 and a rank of sixth out of 15 indicators. This issue was not as divisive, in terms of responses, as domestic violence and child maltreatment — though there



were still noticeable differences of opinion by race and income.

Neither place of residence nor household status made much difference to a person's response. Somewhat under half of both beltway-insiders and outsiders thought this a reasonable concern, 45.6 percent of insiders and 44.9 percent of outsiders. As for household status, on this issue, dual parents were slightly more concerned than single parents, but not by much: 45.6 percent of dual parents thought this issue reasonably worrying, as did 42.1 percent of single parents (single parents were also far more likely not to answer, 17.5 percent to 7.9 percent).

Women were more concerned about student suspensions than men. While 40.7 percent of male respondents said they were reasonably concerned about this, 49.1 percent of women did so. Similar proportions of men and women thought this to be of only limited importance (about 45 percent in each case), but men were far more likely than women not to know: 13.8 percent, compared to 6.3 percent.

Viewpoints by economic class were very different, with lower-end earners being considerably more concerned about suspensions than upper-end earners. While only 41.5 percent of the better-off set of respondents thought this issue to be reasonably troubling, 53.3 percent of lower-end earners thought this to be the case. In fact, 5.3 percent of lower-end earners gave this issue a maximum-concern 10 score, as against 2.3 percent of upper-end earners.

The greatest cleavage was by race. Among white respondents, 42.4 percent were reasonably concerned about school suspensions. Among African-Americans, the rate was far higher: 55.2 percent. This concern reflects that fact that in Baltimore County and across the state as a whole, black students are considerably more likely to be suspended than students of other races. Statewide, black pupils constitute 36.8 percent

Student suspensions placed fairly high in the public's mind, with a score of 5.38 out of 10 and a rank of sixth out of 15 indicators. There were noticeable differences of opinion by race and income. The greatest cleavage was by race.

of the student body, but account for 54.0 percent of suspended students. In the county, African-Americans comprise 30.8 percent of students (MSDE 2000c:8), but 47.0 percent of suspendees (MSDE 1999b:3).

5.C.4. Chronic Absenteeism

Question: The next issue is chronic absenteeism from school, that is, missing 20 or more days of school a year. On a scale of 1 to 10, how big a problem is chronic absenteeism from school in Baltimore County?

The issue of chronic absenteeism — that is, students absent 20 or more days a year from school — is related to that of students suspensions. Certainly, we considered both to be measures of student disruptiveness. Interestingly, this issue ranked lower in the public's hierarchy of issues than did suspensions. Scoring 5.19 out of 10, it ranked ninth of 15 indicators. This lower score was not the result of an overall lower level of concern in regard to this issue as compared to concern for suspensions. It was mostly the result of lower concern among blacks and/or lower-end earners, who had exhibited high concern about suspensions but no correspondingly high concern about absenteeism.

As with suspensions, neither geographic location nor household status made much difference to a person's answer about chronic absenteeism. Thirty-six percent of beltway-insiders and 38.0 percent of beltway-outsiders were reasonably concerned about absenteeism. Similar proportions of single and dual parents expressed reasonable concern: 37.2 percent of dual parents and 36.6 percent of single parents.

As with suspensions, women were more concerned about absenteeism than men; neither set of respondents was as concerned as it had been about suspensions. Among women, 39.6 percent were reasonably concerned about absenteeism; among men, 33.8 percent.

Incomewise, upper-end earners expressed somewhat less concern for absenteeism than they had for suspensions: about 40 percent were reasonably concerned, in this case. The big difference was with lower-end earners. While 53.3 percent of lower-end earners had been reasonably concerned about suspensions, only 41.3 percent of them were similarly concerned about chronic absenteeism. This said, 9.3 percent of lower-end earners were enormously concerned about absenteeism, compared to only 4.1 percent of upper-end earners.

When the respondents were categorized by race, the story was similar. Whites expressed rather less concern for absenteeism than for suspensions: 36.6 percent reasonably concerned about absenteeism, against 42.4 percent for suspensions. But black concern was even more diminished, compared to the disquiet expressed over suspensions. While 55.2 percent of African-American respondents had been reasonably concerned about suspensions, only 37.9



percent were as concerned about absenteeism. In fact, more blacks expressed only limited concern about absenteeism than whites: 55.2 percent to 50.4 percent. Whites were twice as likely not to give an answer than blacks, 13.0 percent to 6.9 percent.

5.C.5. Juvenile Arrests

The issue of juvenile arrest rates was broken down into three sub-indicators for the purposes of our statistical research (see chapter 4), though in the survey we only asked two questions. Because homicide is a component of violent crime, we simply asked one question on violent crime, without a separate one for homicide specifically. The questions were as follows:

Question: The next issue is the amount of violent crime committed by teenagers. On a scale of 1 to 10, how big a problem is violent crime committed by teenagers in Baltimore County?

Question: The next issue is the amount of property crime committed by teenagers, that is, crimes like vehicle theft, purse snatching and breaking and entering. On a scale of 1 to 10, how big a problem is property crime committed by teenagers in Baltimore County?

The responses corresponding to these questions are analyzed below.

5.C.5.1. Homicides: No specific question asked on this issue.

5.C.5.2. Violent Crime: Our statistical analysis found teenage violent crime to be a serious issue in Baltimore County. Intriguingly, the public does not particularly share our apprehension. With a score of only 4.72 out of 10, this issue ranked tenth out of the 15 indicators, as far as the respondents were concerned. To the degree there was any opinion cleavage, it was by race.

Violent crime is often supposed to be an urban phenomenon and, whether or not it actually is, this common perception was somewhat reflected in respondent attitudes. While 33.2 percent of beltway-outsiders thought of teen violent crime as being a reasonable concern, a rather higher 39.5 percent of beltway-insiders did. Outsiders were also twice as likely not to volunteer an answer: 5.3 percent, next to 2.6 percent.

There was little division of opinion by gender. In fact, women were slightly less concerned about violent crime than men, which we found unexpected, given that rape is a component of violent crime. While 36.6 percent of male respondents proved reasonably concerned about teen violent crime, a slightly lower 34.0 percent of females did do. Women were more likely than men not to answer: 5.7

percent versus 2.8 percent.

There was no real difference of opinion between single and dual parents. About a third of each were reasonably worried about teen violent crime: 36.0 percent of dual parents and 33.3 percent of single parents.

Lower-end earners were a little more worried about violent crime than upper-end earners, with 37.3 percent of them expressing reasonable worry, as opposed to 34.9 percent of upper-end earners. Despite this overall similarity in view, 8.0 percent of lower-end earners were enormously concerned, compared to only 2.0 percent of upper-end earners.

African-Americans were definitely more worried about violent crime than whites: 44.8 percent of them said they were reasonably concerned, while only 32.4 percent of whites did so. Only about half of black respondents dismissed teen violence as being of limited concern (51.7 percent), whereas almost two-thirds of whites did (63.0 percent). Again, this should not surprise us, as African-Americans make up the overwhelming majority of victims of violent crime. Comprising a little over a quarter of the state's general population, they account for 82 percent of murder victims, 62 percent of rape victims, 79 percent of robbery victims and 58 percent of aggravated-assault victims (DSP 2000:15, 24, 28, 32).

5.C.5.3. Property Crime: Despite the fact that, overall, violent crime did not loom large in respondents' minds, property crime did. With a score of 5.70 out of 10, this issue ranked fourth in the public's mind.

Presumably reflecting the perception that crime in general, including property crime, is predominantly an urban issue, inside-the-beltway respondents were considerably more likely to be reasonably worried about property crime than beltway outsiders: 58.8 percent as against 48.1 percent. Insiders were also more emphatic in their views: only 1.8 percent declined to answer, compared to 7.0 percent of outsiders.

There was no serious real division of opinion by sex. Slightly over half of men and women were reasonably concerned about property crime, 51.0 percent of the former and 52.2 percent of the latter.

Dual parents were far more concerned about property crime

Violent crime is often supposed to be an urban phenomenon, and this common perception was somewhat reflected in our respondents' attitudes.



Despite the fact that, overall, violent crime did not loom large in respondents' minds, property crime did. With a score of 5.70 out of 10, it ranked fourth of 15.

than single parents, 52.6 percent compared to 40.3 percent. This finding surprised us: single parents tend to have lower income than dual parents and, as we shall see, lower-end earners are more concerned about property crime than upper-end earners.

We therefore expected single parents to be more concerned than dual parents. This was not the case, and we have no explanation for this unexpected finding.

There was a large opinion cleavage by race. Just under half of whites saw property crime as being of reasonable concern (49.2 percent). Considerably more African-Americans thought this, however: 58.6 percent. Only somewhat over a third of blacks thought of property crime as only being a limited concern (37.9 percent), as compared to 45.4 percent of whites. Statistically, as with violent crime, blacks are disproportionately the victims of property crime in Maryland, making up 52 percent of breaking/entering victims, 53 percent of larceny/theft victims and 72 percent of auto-theft victims (DSP 2000:36, 40, 44).

There was an even larger opinion divergence by income. Among upper-end earners, fewer than half found teen property crime to be a reasonable concern (48.7 percent). Among lower-end earners, however, the figure was 61.3 percent. Only about a third of lower-end earners dismissed property crime as being of limited concern (34.7 percent), while a little short of half of upper-end earners did so (46.1 percent).

5.C.6. Juvenile Deaths

In chapter 4, we divided the juvenile-deaths indicator into two sub-indicators, purposeful deaths and accidental deaths. As noted in chapter 4, there are in fact very homicides of teenagers in Baltimore County, just a handful annually, and certainly too small a number from which to generalize. For this reason, we did not ask the public a specific question on purposeful deaths of teens.

Question: The next issue is the accidental death of teenagers, in auto wrecks or other types of accidents. On a scale of 1 to 10, how big a problem is the accidental death rate of teenagers in Baltimore County?

The responses corresponding to this question are analyzed below.

5.C.6.1. Homicide Death: No specific question asked on this issue.

5.C.6.2. Accidental Death: The issue of accidental deaths among county teenagers was of great concern to the public. It ranked third of 15 in the hierarchy of issues, with a score of 6.01 out of 10. Over half of each demographic subgroup thought it to be of reasonable concern. The most serious cleavage was by sex.

Blacks and whites, rich and poor — all were equally concerned about accidental teen deaths. In each case, a little under three-fifths of respondents considered the issue to be of reasonable concern. Among lower-end earners, 58.7 percent thought it a reasonable concern; among upper-end earners, 59.5 percent. For African-Americans, 58.6 percent registered reasonable concern, as did 58.4 percent of Caucasians.

There was some difference of opinion between inside-the-beltway and outside-the-beltway residents, with the insiders being more concerned about accidental deaths than outsiders: 64.0 percent of insiders thought this a reasonable concern, next to 56.1 percent of outsiders.

Dual parents were more concerned than single parents, by a factor of 60.2 percent reasonably concerned to 54.2 percent. It is unclear why this is the case.

Finally, women were notably more concerned about accidental deaths than men. Somewhat over half of males thought this a reasonable problem (53.1 percent), while nearly two-thirds of females were similarly concerned (64.1 percent). And 10.7 percent of women called this an “enormous” concern, compared to a more modest 6.2 percent of men.

5.C.7. Juvenile Intoxicant Use

In chapter 4, we analyzed separate data for 6th and 12th graders. In the opinion poll, however, to avoid being repetitious, we did not ask separate 6th and 12th grade questions. Also, for the drinking question, we decided against confusing the issue by specifically referring to wine and beer drinking per the statistical analysis.

Question: The next issue is underage drinking of alcohol. On a scale of 1 to 10, how big a problem is teenage drinking in Baltimore County?

Question: The next issue is the abuse of illegal drugs by teenagers. On a scale of 1 to 10, how big a problem is teenage drug abuse in Baltimore County?

The responses corresponding to these questions are analyzed below.

5.C.7.1 and 2. Drinking Among Teens: The issue of teen drinking ranked first and foremost as



Table 24

**Relative Importance of Other Indicators:
Respondents' Volunteered Answers to Open-Ended Question**

| Rank | Issue and Description | Number of Respondents Giving this Answer |
|------|---|---|
| 1. | More/better/safe programs/activities for children, especially before and after school | 12 |
| 2. | More parental involvement in children's lives | 4 |
| 3. | More programs for children with special needs | 3 |
| 4. | Schools/classrooms too crowded | 2 |
| 5. | More/better health care for children | 2 |
| 6. | Affordable day care availability | 1 |
| 7. | More jobs for teenagers | 1 |
| 8. | Better security | 1 |
| 9. | Too much access to Internet chat rooms | 1 |
| 10. | Too much peer pressure | 1 |
| 11. | Need more sex education | 1 |

far as the respondents were concerned. With a score of 7.16 out of 10, this was first in the public's hierarchy of indicators. Approximately three-quarters of each demographic subgroup registered reasonable concern about this issue, the only real exception being single parents, who were even more worried.

Beltway outsiders were marginally more concerned about teen drinking than insiders, 77.0 percent to 74.6 percent. All the same, a higher proportion of insiders were enormously worried, 13.1 percent to 10.7 percent. Outsiders were also slightly less likely to respond than insiders: their DK rate was 5.9 percent; the insiders' rate was only 4.4 percent.

Income made no difference to a respondent's opinion. Among lower-end earners, 76.0 percent were reasonably concerned; among upper-end earners, 75.9 percent. About equal proportions thought the matter an enormous concern, too: 12.0 percent of lower-end earners and 12.3 percent of upper-end earners.

Men and women were both substantially concerned, women slightly more so. Among men, 74.5 percent thought teen drinking a reasonable concern; among women, 77.4 percent. Women were considerably more likely to view this issue as an enormous problem: 16.4 percent of them thought of it thus, as against 6.2 percent of men.

Though hardly sanguine about adolescent drinking, African-American respondents were somewhat less concerned about it than whites:

70.7 percent of blacks were reasonably concerned, compared to 76.9 percent of whites. Whites were considerably more likely to see teen drinking as an enormous problem, 11.3 percent of them, next to 6.9 percent of blacks. Additionally, blacks were notably more likely not to answer than whites: 10.3 percent to 3.8 percent.

The greatest difference of opinion was between dual parents and single parents. While 74.5 percent of dual parents considered teen drinking to be a reasonable concern, a substantially higher 82.5 percent of single parents did so. Single parents were also more likely to see this as an "enormous" problem (14.0 percent to 10.5 percent), and they were less likely to say they did not know the answer (1.8 percent to 6.3 percent).

5.C.7.3 and 4. Drug Taking Among Teens: Adolescent drug use came in a close second behind adolescent drinking, as far as public opinion was concerned. This issue scored 6.97 out of 10 and ranked second out of 15 indicators. And the public was slightly more set in its views on drug taking than on drinking: the overall DK rate for the drug ques-

The issue of teen drinking ranked first and foremost as far as public opinion was concerned, with a score of 7.16 out of 10.



tion was just 3.0 percent, compared to 5.3 percent for the drinking question. Interestingly, while overall concern about drugs was about the same as that for drinking, the response patterns by demographic subgroup were not the same.

As was not the case with drinking, for drug use, overall, beltway insiders were a little more concerned than outsiders, possibly reflecting the disproportionately urban nature of the drug problem. Among insiders, 75.4 percent were reasonably concerned, compared to 71.7 percent of outsiders. Insiders were also far more likely to view this as an enormous problem than outsiders, 17.5 percent to 5.9 percent.

While lower-end earners were as concerned about drinking as upper-end earners, the same did not hold true in regards to drug taking. Over three fourths of lower-end earners thought of teen drinking as a reasonable problem (76.0 percent), but fewer than two-thirds thought of teen drug taking in the same light (65.3 percent). By contrast upper-end earners were slightly more concerned about teen drug abuse than they were about teen drinking: 75.9 percent thought of drinking as reasonably problematic, while 76.9 percent thought the same of drugs.

Overall, black respondents were, as with the drinking question, slightly less concerned than whites: 70.7 percent of them were reasonably worried versus 73.9 percent of whites. In contrast to the drinking question, however, some African-Americans were far more likely to view teen drug taking as an enormous problem. While only 8.0 percent of whites registered this as an enormous problem, 19.0 percent of blacks did. On the other hand, African-Americans were also more likely to be undecided on this issue: their DK rate was 5.2 percent, compared to whites' 1.7 percent.

As with drinking, men were less concerned than women about drug taking, and the division was greater in this case. Compared to the 76.1 percent of women who were reasonably concerned about this

issue, only 69.7 percent of men responded in this manner. Women were twice as likely to be enormously concerned, too: 13.2 percent next to 6.9 percent.

5.D. Open-Ended Question

As described in chapter 2, we

early on decided against allowing respondents to volunteer a series of issues that concerned them. We were concerned that this would (a) lead to time-consuming "venting" at the survey telephone operators, (b) result in a list of concerns not within the purview of county policy makers and (c) encourage respondents with no serious concerns to make up issues on the spot in an attempt to please the operators. However, we did permit respondents one opportunity at the end of the survey to volunteer any issue they felt had been omitted by the survey menu.

Question: Is there any issue I have not mentioned affecting children and youth in Baltimore County that you think is a problem?

The responses to this question entirely justified our decision not to use open-ended questions throughout. For a start, only 29 of 304 respondents opted to suggest an issue, fewer than 10 percent. Second, as anticipated, a number of these responses pertained to issues well outside the scope of county officials' responsibilities ("too much access to Internet chat rooms," "too much peer pressure" and the need for "more parental involvement in children's lives").

The 29 respondents' volunteered answers are shown in table 24. The clear winner was children's activities, especially before and after school. Twelve respondents volunteered an answer along these lines. Four parents advocated more parental involvement in children's lives. Three wished to see more programs for special-needs children. Two favored smaller class sizes. Another two favored better health care for children. All the other volunteered answers had only one advocate each.

Adolescent drug use came in a close second behind adolescent drinking. The issue scored 6.97 out of 10 and ranked second out of 15 indicators.



Part III

Focus for the Future

Chapter 6: Concluding Focus

This concluding chapter summarizes the report's main findings, reviews existing county programs related to children's issues and suggests steps for the future.

6.A. Statistical Analysis

Having conducted an extensive, comprehensive needs assessment, the Baltimore County Local Management Board has identified three result areas on which to focus over the next five years.

6.A.1. Babies Born Healthy

Baltimore County's incidence of infant mortality is second-highest of all the jurisdictions in the Baltimore metropolitan area. Among the suburban counties, Baltimore County's infant mortality rate is indeed the highest. While the statewide and metrowide infant mortality rates have been falling, that of Baltimore County has been rising.

The rate of increase of low-birth-weight babies in this jurisdiction has been considerably greater than at the state and metropolitan levels.

Though the rate of births to teenage mothers under 15 in Baltimore County has declined in recent years, the rate of decline has been far greater statewide and metrowide than it has been in this jurisdiction. In the 15-19 age bracket, the county's teen pregnancy rate is higher than for any of the other metropolitan suburban counties. For this age bracket, the county's birth rate actually increased during the 1990s. As children born to teen mothers are more likely than children of older mothers to be born prematurely and at low birth weight, these statistics on teen births give some cause for concern.

6.A.2. Children Entering School Ready to Learn

From the limited data available on kindergartners' readiness to learn, it appears that Baltimore County ranks second to last in the metropolitan area for children being at full readiness to learn.

While kindergarten attendance — hypothesized to be a measure of school readiness — has increased over the last 10 years, in the year 2000,

the rate of kindergarten attendance in Baltimore County was the lowest of all the metro jurisdictions and lower than the statewide attendance rate. However, it should be added that, overall, the rate of attendance is high across the metro area and has been for most of the past decade.

Although Baltimore County's 3rd grade MSPAP scores have been higher than the statewide average in every year since 1993, the county scored lowest among all of the suburban counties in every year but 1998 and 2000. This said, though a little lower, the Baltimore County scores are not far out of line with those of the other suburban counties.

6.A.3. Children Safe in their Families and Communities

Although the thoroughness of reporting on domestic violence may vary somewhat from county to county, it appears that Baltimore County's rate of domestic violence is the highest of any jurisdiction in the state. It is 66.2 percent higher than the statewide rate.

Baltimore County ranks third-highest in the metro area with regard to the rate of incidence of physical abuse of children and second-highest with regard to sexual abuse, though, especially for physical abuse, the figures are not terribly much higher than elsewhere in the region.

Although the rate of student suspensions is a somewhat controversial measure of student disruptiveness and, consequently, a controversial proxy indicator of the stability of a child's home life, it is nonetheless a concern that, from 1993-1999, the county's annual suspension rate (for all grades combined) increased by 48.3 percent, the second-highest increase in the metro area.

From 1990-1999, the Baltimore County rate of arrests for violent crimes committed by juveniles was consistently second only to the rate for Baltimore City.

Baltimore County's juvenile

Baltimore County's rate of domestic violence appears to be the highest of any jurisdiction in the state.



property-crime arrest rate is the highest in the entire metropolitan region, even higher than that of the city.

The rate of accidental deaths of juveniles in Baltimore County is second only to that of one other county in the region.

Based on data from the state Department of Education's biannual *Maryland Adolescent Survey* for counties in the Baltimore metro region, from 1992 through 2000, only Baltimore County documented an increase in the percentage of 12th graders regularly drinking. Drinking among high schoolers has remained consistently higher than the prevailing statewide average. In addition, from 1994-2000, Baltimore County was one of three metropolitan counties that saw an increase in drug use among 12th graders.

6.B. Polling Data

To further assist the LMB in determining where energies and resources should be targeted over the next few years, we commissioned a public opinion poll to assess the degree to which there was correspondence between, on the one hand, the significance of certain issues as determined by statistical

While the LMB will be certain to direct resources to address the issues identified in this report, this will not preclude the LMB from also directing resources to address other issues.

analysis and, on the other hand, the extent to which those issues resonated with families living in Baltimore County. In brief, the issues of (a) teen drinking, (b) teen drug taking and (c) teen accidental deaths were found to be of most serious concern to the public; also important in the public's mind

were (d) teen crime, particularly property crime, and (e) teen pregnancies. On all these issues, our statistical analysis revealed the county's situation to be less than optimal.

While the LMB will be certain to direct resources to address these issues in the context of its five-year plan, this will not preclude the LMB from also directing resources to address indicators that may be of even greater significance statistically.

6.C. Program Review

There are many programs in Baltimore County that target the identified result areas. These are summarized below. Further detail on each can be

found at the Internet sites of both the county government (<http://www.co.ba.md.us>) and the county public library system (<http://www.bcplonline.org>).

6.C.1 Healthy Families

The Healthy Families program provides intensive, in-home support for pregnant women and children through the age of five. It is designed to improve developmental outcomes and reduce maltreatment of children. Program staff assess families for service needs and provide assistance with or linkages to medical, psychological and/or social services while being an on-going, consistent presence and support in the home of each family served. In addition to state sub-cabinet funding and a county in-kind match provided to the program vendor by the LMB to serve two communities in the southeast area of the county, the vendor has successfully solicited funding from two other sources to expand the program to the northwest area. Healthy Families primarily addresses the result areas of "babies born healthy," "children enter school ready to learn" and, to some extent, "children safe in their families and communities."

In fiscal years 2001 and 2002, the LMB received funding to contract a study in the area of the county where the number of teen pregnancies is the highest to determine the attitudes and beliefs held that suggest that having a baby as a teenager is acceptable. Once these attitudes and beliefs are identified, education strategies can be developed to illustrate the multiple benefits of delaying parenthood. The study is supported with sub-cabinet/LMB funds.

6.C.2. Maryland-After School Opportunity Fund

With Maryland Department of Human Resources, Child Care Administration funding, the LMB has awarded funds to multiple vendors to provide after-school programs for (a) mainstream middle school children in six communities of the county (pursuant to needs identified through an extensive data analysis) and (b) some special-needs populations in some of these same communities (and others). Programs offer educational assistance, life-skills development and recreation. Counseling is available (a) in the mainstream programs to conduct peer discussion groups or to provide individual and family counseling and (b) as a primary component of a program for emotionally disturbed children. With the initial award of \$1.26 million, the program has served over a thousand youth during the hours of 3:00-6:00 p.m. and during the summer, times when children are most at risk of engaging in undesirable behaviors. The program



addresses a variety of indicators under the result area of “children safe in their families and communities.”

6.C.3. Interagency Family Preservation Program

As a subcontractor of the LMB, the local Department of Social Services provides intensive, in-home support to families of youth in any area of the county who have been identified as being at imminent risk of out-of-home placement.

The primary goal of the Interagency Family Preservation (IFP) program is to identify with the family and put into place those resources that are indicated to maintain the family unit. Youth may be referred by the local Department of Social Services, Department of Juvenile Justice, Health Department/Bureau of Mental Health/Core Service Agency or the Baltimore County public schools system. Each of the referring agencies has a gatekeeper who screens referrals for appropriateness for these services and who collaborates with the IFP program vendor during and after participation in the IFP. This is one of the core programs for which the LMB receives funding from the subcabinet. This program, too, primarily targets several of the indicators of “children safe in their families and communities.” It may also impact others of the eight result areas defined by the state.

6.C.4. Youth Service Bureaus

The four Youth Service Bureau agencies in Baltimore County that are funded with SCYF funds — and some county matching funds — provide community-based juvenile delinquency prevention and intervention services to youth and their families. Services may include individual and family counseling, suicide and other crisis interventions, substance-abuse assessment, general information and referral for treatment. Youth Service Bureaus also receive funds from the LMB, awarded pursuant to the state’s Disruptive Youth initiative (see below). These funds target elementary school children that have either been expelled from school or are at risk of being expelled. The services provided by Youth Service Bureaus also focus on multiple indicators of “children safe in their families and communities.”

6.C.5. Disruptive Youth Program

The county public schools receive subcabinet/LMB funding to provide home-based therapeutic services to expelled elementary school children on home teaching. This program primarily targets “children safe in their families and communities.”

6.C.6. Consolidated Education Grant

With funding from the state subcabinet/LMB, the Baltimore County public schools provide training to staff regarding child abuse and suicide prevention and counseling for participants in a pregnant and parenting teens program. The primary target of this program is “children safe in their families and communities.”

6.C.7. Youth Strategies Consolidated Grant

In fiscal 2002 and 2003, Baltimore County will be receiving funds from the Governor’s Office for Crime Control and Prevention to support several juvenile delinquency and substance-abuse prevention and intervention programs in the communities of middle schools identified as top priority and priority one schools by the local superintendent of schools, as follows:

6.C.7.1. Juvenile Offenders in Need of Supervision (JOINS) Program: This is an early-intervention program for first-time offenders, based on the theory of restorative justice. Cooperative participants are diverted from involvement with the juvenile justice system.

6.C.7.2. Adolescent Substance Abuse Intervention Program (ASAIP): This program offers substance-abuse assessment, education and referral for JOINS participants who are known to be or are suspected of being substance abusers.

6.C.7.3. Multi-Systemic Therapy (MST): This is an intensive, home-based intervention targeting chronic, violent or substance-abusing juvenile offenders at risk of out-of-home placement, employing a structured methodology. Patented treatment focuses on reducing the anti-social behavior of adolescents by addressing the various systems that influence their behavior.

6.C.7.4. Mentoring Program: Volunteer adult mentors meet with youth for mutually determined recreational activities with the goals of reducing delinquent behavior in the youth, increasing their school attendance, enhancing their personal development and developing in them a sense of community and social responsibility.

6.C.7.5. Family Attendance Counseling and Encouragement Program (FACE): The FACE program is a proactive and remedial approach to addressing truancy, an issue discussed above at § 4.C.4.

The Baltimore County public schools receive funding to provide home-based therapeutic services to expelled children.



6.C.7.6. *School Behavior Management Specialist*: A specialist provides training and support for teachers in the management of disruptive behaviors.

6.C.7.7. *Student Assistance Program*: The Student Assistance Program is a school-based program that utilizes a systematic procedure for identifying, intervening with and/or referring students who are potentially at-risk because of dysfunctional behavior patterns suggesting involvement with drugs, alcohol and/or tobacco.

These programs address multiple result areas, but primarily the result area of “children safe in their families and communities.”

6.C.8. Child Care/Business Collaboration

The LMB has subcontracted a vendor (a) to conduct a study to assess the impact that employees’ child-care issues have on work and the work force, (b) to provide on-site technical assistance and support to employees regarding child care/work life issues and (c) to conduct a public-awareness campaign regarding work life issues and gaps in child-care resources in Baltimore County. The source of funds is the subcabinet. This project primarily targets the result area “children enter school ready to learn.”

To be safe in his/her family and community is the most basic right of any child. The extent to which children are safe is truly reflective of the health of their communities.

6.D. A New Focus

Over the next five years, the Baltimore County Local Management Board plans, first, to focus on the three result areas identified above.

6.D.1. Babies Born Healthy

Given that prenatal development and the first few years of a child’s life are critically important to later success, it is vital that efforts are made to ensure that all babies are born healthy.

6.D.2. Children Enter School Ready to Learn

There is current research to indicate that success in school is not just a factor in determining the economic future of the individual, but also is a significant predictor of behavior. That is, academic failure is a major predictor of probable behavior and other adjustment problems (Sprague [undated]). Likewise,

Developmental Research and Programs, Inc. cite academic failure beginning in late elementary school as a risk factor for substance abuse, delinquency, teen pregnancy, school drop-out and violence (DRP 2000:1,4).

6.D.3. Children Safe in their Families and Communities

To be safe in his/her family and community is the most basic and inalienable right of any child. The extent to which children are safe in their families and communities is truly reflective of the health of their communities and the ability of these communities to produce healthy, productive citizens.

The Baltimore County LMB is also committed to early childhood development and family support initiatives, the impact of which may cross each of the above-referenced result areas and others. Many of the problems that are manifested in preteen and teenage years have their roots in early childhood. As concluded by the National Academy of Sciences, enhancement of social and emotional development is as important in early childhood as enhancement of linguistic and cognitive competence (MHD 2002:2). The academy has recommended that resources similar to those focused on literacy and numeric skills should be devoted to promoting young children’s social and emotional development.

The healthy physical, social and emotional development of young children is essential for success in school and later in life. Early intervention with children who demonstrate social and emotional development needs can positively and broadly impact so many of the results and indicators of child well-being, resulting in later savings in public expenditures for special education, income support and criminal justice. Developing and implementing early childhood strategies would, therefore, demonstrate responsible and effective public policy, while fulfilling the responsibility of the LMB to “shift the programmatic focus to prevention and early intervention services,” as articulated in the *Local Management Board Policies and Procedures Manual* (SCYF 2000:2).

Second, the LMB will, within fiscal constraints, address the most serious indicators of those results with strategies that promise to have the broadest impact. As most of the money that supports LMB-administered programs and services is public money, the LMB will also take into consideration those issues that are of primary concern to the public.

Third, the LMB will assure that any new strategies that are developed will be integrated



with existing programs and services to strengthen the impact of the existing programs and services, creating a coordinated service delivery system.

The detail of the strategies to be pursued by the LMB and the projection of their impact will be outlined in the forthcoming concept paper.

The End



FOCUS ON FAMILIES

Appendix 1: Baltimore County Local Management Board

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Health Officer
Department of Health
Baltimore County

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Baltimore County

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Department of Juvenile Justice
State of Maryland

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Administrative Office
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Appendix 2a: Birth-6 Committee

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(A non-profit service agency)

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Baltimore County

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Ms. Carol Costante
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(A child care placement agency)



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Prevention Coordinator
Bureau of Substance Abuse
Department of Health
Baltimore County

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Baltimore County Public Schools
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Play Keepers, Inc.
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Department of Health
Baltimore County

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Appendix 2c: LMB 12-21 Committee

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Baltimore County Public Schools
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