



***Prince George's County
Community Needs Assessment,
2006***

Commission for Children, Youth and Families
Prince George's County, Maryland

July 2006



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Suggested Citation: Prince George's County Commission for Children, Youth and Families (CCYF). 2006. Prince George's County Community Needs Assessment, 2006. Camp Springs, Md.: CCYF, July.

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Executive Summary

In many ways, Prince George's County has entered the 21st century at a crossroads: the semi-rural, tobacco-producing county of as recently as 30 years ago is now a bustling suburban jurisdiction, with the second-highest population of any county in Maryland. Overall, it is one of the very richest "majority-minority" counties in the United States; yet, within its borders lie considerable pockets of poverty, breeding less than desirable public- and community-health indicators.

How the jurisdiction addresses the critical issues that challenge children and families will determine the health of its communities, the preparedness of its work force and, indeed, the quality of life of its citizens.

Why This Report?

This document represents Prince George's County's first comprehensive, cross-agency examination of the many facets of child well-being within its boundaries. The county's Commission for Children, Youth and Families — also known as the Local Management Board or LMB — has selected 3 "result" areas and 13 associated "indicators" by which to measure the welfare or "social health" of minors in the jurisdiction. Patterned on state-recommended results, those the LMB selected are:

- Babies born healthy.
- Children successful in school.
- Children safe in their families and communities.

In selecting the 13 well-being indicators referred to above, the LMB 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 readers with a clear picture of how Prince George's County ranks in comparison to (a) Maryland

as a whole and (b) the other jurisdictions in the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area. Through the use of myriad charts and tables, this publication permits the visualization of just how the county doing at this precise moment and how it has been progressing over the past few years. The exhaustive statistical, "county snapshot" material presented herein on each of the indicators will serve as the baseline for the tracking task ahead.

The study goes further than this, however. The LMB also selected 11 neighborhoods within the county for closer scrutiny. A considerable amount of information on each of these was collected; for each neighborhood, this was then compared against the other 10 and against the county as a whole ("intra-county comparisons").

In addition to gathering a chapter's worth of inter-county and intra-county statistical comparisons, the LMB 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?

Finally, the LMB also oversaw the convening of three focus groups, each designed to expand upon the information gathered during the opinion poll.

Public Opinion and What the Data Say

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' perception and analytical inter-county comparison are:

This document represents Prince George's County's first comprehensive, cross-agency examination of the many facets of child well-being within its boundaries.

- Teen motherhood.
- Chronic school absenteeism.

On each of these measures, Prince George's County is severely 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 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 say — that the county's indicators on these two neo-natal indicators are dramatically 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. Teen deaths, for example, are a big concern to the public. However, the statistical analysis reveals teen deaths to be very uncommon in Prince George's, and the

death rate, such as it is, is largely in synch with the rates in the neighboring counties.

As will become readily apparent over the ensuing pages, the Local Management Board has herein demonstrated its acknowledgement of, and commitment to, the problems of county youth, as established both by data and public perception. The Prince George's County Commission for Children, Youth and Families 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 families, to circumvent these problems in a whole new generation of county citizens.

— June 2006

On each of these measures — teen motherhood and school absenteeism — Prince George's County is severely 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.

Part I: Background

Chapter 1. Introduction

Prince George's County, Maryland has changed a great deal in the last century, half-century and even decade, and it is safe to assume that rapid growth, improvements and alterations of the landscape, population and other characteristics of the county will continue for the foreseeable future. With so little ahead that is certain, how can the county be sure that it is as well prepared as it can be to meet the challenges ahead? One answer is by continuing to focus on the health and safety of the county's most valuable resources: its children, youth and families. How well the county maintains its focus on the issues facing its young people will have considerable effect — whether positive or negative — on the county's future prospects.

1.A. Putting the County First

This document — an examination of various indicators of child and youth well-being in Prince George's County — is the product of a year-long effort by the county's Commission for Children, Youth and Families (CCYF), referred to in this report as the Local Management Board or LMB, this being the most common name for the analogous entities in the other counties of the state. (Acronyms and abbreviations are explained at appendix 1.) To focus this examination, the LMB selected 3 measurable goals or "results" and 13 associated "indicators" as a means of measuring the social and physical well-being of the county's children and youth:

- Babies born healthy.
- Children successful in school.
- Children safe in their families and communities.

The 13 indicators mentioned above (listed in table 1) represent quantifiable measures of the county's level of success at moving toward the three listed results. For example, one indi-

cator of whether or not babies are being born healthy is the infant mortality rate; another is the rate at which county mothers receive timely prenatal care; and so forth.

Using these results and indicators, this report compares Prince George's County to its neighbors and to Maryland as a whole, in addition to examining a selection of neighborhoods within the county. These comparisons are presented in over six dozen graphs and tables, explained in detailed narrative. This rich collection of county vital statistics offers a baseline from which the success of future improvement efforts may be measured.

Statistical analysis is not the only tool at this report's disposal, however. In an effort to capture the public's concerns on certain issues affecting county minors, the LMB convened three focus groups and also commissioned a random telephone survey. The goal was to see if those issues that seemed statistically problematic were of concern to the public as well.

1.B. Statistical and Public Priorities

The comparison between public opinion and statistical analysis identified two issues about which public opinion most closely matched the data: teenage motherhood and chronic school absence. The county lags behind its neighbors on both of these issues, and respondents to the telephone poll expressed concern. Other issues of both statistical and public concern were:

- Child maltreatment.
- Children's readiness to learn.
- Lack of early school experience.
- Low-birth-weight babies.
- Mothers receiving late or no prenatal care.

It should be pointed out that the public accorded these issues only medium concern, while statistical analysis found them to be more pressing. However, the process of labeling level of concern in either case was approximate, so it is probably safe to say that the public would respond favorably to improvement efforts in these areas as well.

Some issues concerned the public more than is probably warranted by the data picture. For example, survey respondents considered juvenile crime highly problematic in the county, even though juvenile arrest rates in two of the three categories examined lag behind the rates of at least some of the neighboring jurisdictions.

One issue that can be said to be statistically pressing while at the same time that off of the public's radar altogether is infant mortality. This indicator ranked lowest in respondents' minds, even though Prince George's County is significantly behind its neighbors when it comes to preventing deaths of infants in the first year of life.

1.C. LMB Mission

The task of caring for children and youth is a complicated one, requiring the dedicated efforts of parents, advocates, human-services providers and other county officials. Where problems do exist, the LMB is determined to focus its energy, expertise and resources in order to ensure that every child in Prince George's County can grow up healthy, safe and strong. The LMB's mission, then, is to exploit its interagency nature and the considerable expertise of its members to ensure that government and private-sector resources are directed as efficiently as possible to those communities and individuals that need them most, while taking into account the specific needs and other characteristics of all of the communities within the county's borders.

Chapter 2. The Role of the LMB

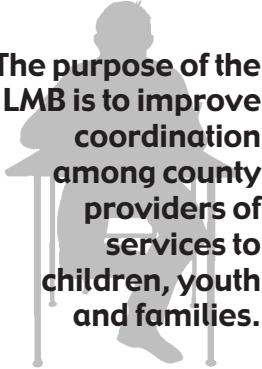
The Prince George's County LMB consists of representatives from many different county agencies, and of a variety of community members, with the purpose of improving the

delivery of health, education and safety services to children, youth and families residing in the county. This section explains the background and goals of the LMB.

2.A. Purpose

This report and the entity releasing it have their start in the 1989 creation of Maryland's Subcabinet for Children, Youth and Families (SCYF) by then-Governor William Donald Schaefer (SCYF 2000:2). SCYF is an interagency entity originally populated by the heads of the Maryland departments of Budget and Management, Education, Health and Mental Hygiene, Human Resources, and Juvenile Justice, as well as the head of the Office for Individuals with Disabilities and the special secretary for children, youth and families. SCYF's goal is to streamline and otherwise improve services for children and youth in Maryland by opening avenues of communication among agency and department heads, thereby enhancing coordination and reducing duplication of services. The subcabinet is staffed by the Governor's Office for Children, formerly the Governor's Office for Children, Youth and Families (OCYF).

In 1990, the state legislature required each jurisdiction within Maryland to create a similar county-level entity. The state refers to these entities as local management boards. (In Prince George's County, the role of the LMB is filled by the Commission on Children, Youth and Families, referred to throughout this report as "the LMB.") Like the SCYF, the purpose of the LMBs is to improve coordination among county providers of services to children, youth and families. Under state requirements, LMB membership rolls must at a minimum include representatives of each county's agencies in charge of education, juvenile justice, health, mental health and social services, although each jurisdiction may invite additional members, including representatives of private-sector service providers. The LMBs do not actually provide any services, of course, but rather provide guidance for and oversight of service provision.



The purpose of the LMB is to improve coordination among county providers of services to children, youth and families.

Table 1

Prince George's County Local Management Board:
Selected Results and Indicators

Result	Indicator
1. Babies Born Healthy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low birth weights trends & intercounty comparisons • Infant mortality trends & intercounty comparisons • Early prenatal care trends & intercounty comparisons
2. Children Successful in School	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kindergarten readiness (Work Sampling System) intercounty comparisons • 3rd grade reading (MSPAP/MSA scores) trends & intercounty comparisons • Violence-related suspensions trends & intercounty comparisons • Absences from school trends & intercounty comparisons
3. Children Safe in Their Families and Communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teen violent deaths trends & intercounty comparisons • Child abuse and neglect trends & intercounty comparisons • Juvenile arrests trends & intercounty comparisons • Non-violent offenses trends & intercounty comparisons • Violent offenses trends & intercounty comparisons • Homicide offenses trends & intercounty comparisons

It is the responsibility of each LMB to develop a local, community-based, service-delivery system for children and families according to certain state-mandated goals and procedures. To this end, each LMB must perform a needs assessment within its own jurisdiction and draft a strategic plan for addressing the most critical problems discovered. (The needs assessment leads to the development of the five-year strategic community plan.) This planning process must take into account various "results," or goals, the state's own results being:

- 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.
- Stable and economically independent families.
- Communities that support family life (OCYF 2001).

As measures of the extent to which these results are being achieved, the state suggests three or four "indicators," or measurable characteristics, under each result. For example, the infant mortality rate is suggested as one measure of the "babies born healthy" result. LMBs may adopt any or all of these indicators, or devise their own, similar indicators.

As described in section 2.C, the Prince George's County LMB initially chose to focus on three results and 13 associated indicators. The selected results are: (a) babies born healthy, (b) children successful in school and (c) children safe in their families and communities. The results and final indicators are shown in table 1.

2.B. Involvement

This report represents the input and expertise of a great many people. The process was begun under the former Prince George's County's LMB director, L. Christine Waddler. It continued to be supervised by the membership of LMB. Chaired by Maralita L. Freeny and

directed by Judy M. Dubose, the LMB has 17 members (listed in appendix 2), representing the county's library system, schools, police, health department and other agencies. The LMB's Planning Committee provided direct oversight of the research and writing of this document.

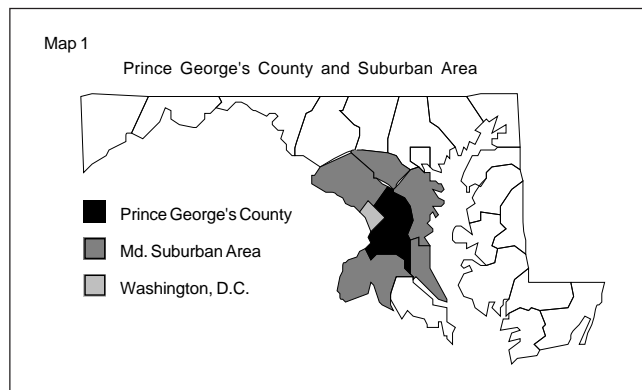
A local consulting company, InterGroup Services, Inc., was hired to assist with researching and writing this report. Gonzales Research and Marketing Strategies, Inc. administered the telephone public opinion survey. Details on both companies are available in appendix 3.

2.C. Rationale

As anyone involved with public policy making will attest, there can sometimes be a disconnect between (a) the public's perception of what constitutes an urgent issue and (b) the statistical picture of said issue. For example, though violent crime has decreased sharply in much of the nation since the mid-1990s, many people remain as concerned for their personal safety as ever, voting and/or lobbying their elected officials accordingly. On the other hand, issues such as low-birth-weight babies do not tend to excite much concern with the public, even when the situation takes a turn for the worse. Obviously, officials must find a way of making the public feel that its concerns are being heard while at the same time directing funding and other resources toward those issues where it can do the most good.

2.D. Methodology

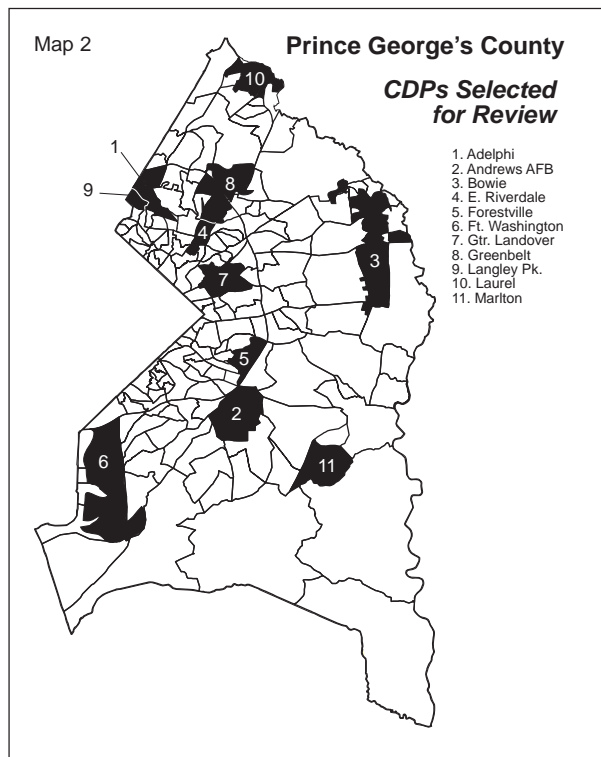
Because of the potential disconnect between public opinion and statistical data, the LMB decided that it would solicit the opinions of Prince George's County residents through both focus groups of concerned citizens and a random telephone poll, but under controlled conditions. Concerned that respondents given open-ended questions might respond with either a laundry list of issues not necessarily under the county's control or with answers not of particular concern to a particular respon-



dent but merely fabricated to placate the interviewer, the LMB decided to phrase its questions in the format, "do you think that such-and-such is a problem?" instead of "what problems do you think Prince George's County faces?" The hope was to avoid vague responses such as "lack of respect for authority" or "kids watching too much TV," to name two hypothetical examples.

The LMB directed IGS (the consulting company) to gather statistical data for the selected results and indicators. A variety of sources were consulted, such as state agencies, the U.S. Bureau of the Census and the Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene. The decision was taken to compare Prince George's County data not simply with statewide data (as this would include rural counties different from Prince George's County in almost every way) but also with those counties that are not only most similar to Prince George's County but which also face many of the same issues. The counties selected for comparison were: Anne Arundel, Calvert, Charles, Howard and Montgomery counties. Together with Prince George's County, these comprise what is referred to throughout this report as the "suburban region" (as in, the Maryland suburbs of Washington, D.C.), shown on map 1.

Also, to give some picture of the statistical variations that might exist on particular indicators within the county, the LMB decided to collect some statistical information at the sub-county level. The geographic entities chosen for this analysis are the census designated place (CDP) and the census incorporated place



(CIP), Census Bureau terms of art that describe areas known locally by name and consisting of what the residents are most likely consider a cohesive, neighborhood-like place. The LMB selected 11 census designated places and census incorporated places, referred to collectively in this report as “the selected CDPs.” The criteria for selection of these CDPs included geographic location (the desire being to represent as many different parts of the county as possible), representativeness of racial demographics and household income figures, and the curiosity of the LMB about certain areas known to experience specific difficulties in the areas of health and safety. Per map 2, the selected CDPs are as follows:

- Adelphi.
- Andrews Air Force Base.
- Bowie.
- East Riverdale.
- Forestville.
- Fort Washington.
- Greater Landover.
- Greenbelt.
- Langley Park.
- Laurel.
- Marlton.

A great deal of information is available by CDP, but it did not turn out to be possible to locate CDP-specific information for every indicator in this report, though in these cases it was mostly available by ZIP code. Cautious about introducing data organized differently than the majority of information that had been collected, the LMB decided that, in the interests of presenting as complete a data picture as possible, approximations between the selected CDPs and the overlapping ZIP codes could be used to present data that would not otherwise have been included. The indicators for which this turned out to be necessary were low birth weights, infant mortality, prenatal care, teenage motherhood, juvenile violent deaths, juvenile arrests and child maltreatment. Since Langley Park and Adelphi share the same ZIP code, data for these two CDPs had to be collapsed into one category on the CDP-ZIP code-based graphs. Readers should be aware that ZIP and CDP boundaries are not the same, though this is unlikely to have had much bearing on our results.

One limitation imposed on statistical research of this kind is the fact that the U.S. Bureau of the Census and other agencies release different categories of information at different times, often starting with the most general information (e.g., national figures on race, sex and ethnicity) and proceeding year by year into more specific topics (e.g., the poverty rate in a small neighborhood in suburban Maryland). For this reason, the reader will note, the dates of the source material cited in this report vary widely and may appear to be out of date. However, the sources consulted were the most recent at press time.

The combination of inter- and intracounty analysis enabled the LMB to consider not only the county’s standing among its neighbors but also the fact that, for example, a favorable countywide figure can sometimes conceal extreme disparities from one part of the county to another.

The LMB elected to use two methods to test the public’s interest in the selected results and

The combination of inter- and intracounty analysis enabled the LMB to consider not only the county's standing among its neighbors but also the fact that a favorable countywide figure can sometimes conceal extreme disparities from one part of the county to another.

indicators: focus groups and a public opinion poll. These two represent quite different approaches and can be expected to return varying results. Focus groups are especially good at suggesting issues and viewpoints not yet considered, but are statistically suspect: for one thing, focus groups can over-represent people with a burning interest in a particular issue; for another, the number of responses is typically much too small to be representative of the larger population. A random telephone poll is quite the opposite: while respondents are limited to answering the questions posed, it is possible to obtain a statistically representative sample, if enough calls are made and none of the respondents is "self-selected." It was hoped that the contrasting qualities of these two approaches would balance each other.

Three focus groups were convened during the research phase of this project, each with a specific topic. The first focus group dealt with Prince George's County's problematic, chronic school absence rates and with teen crime, and was composed of county high schoolers; the second focus group concerned the low early school experience rate (pre- and nursery school attendance, etc.) among county Hispanics and included Hispanic parents of young children; and the third focus group investigated the problematic infant mortality rate by inviting the category of new mothers most affected by infant mortality, African-Americans.

Prior to each focus group, LMB staff worked with IGS to prepare participant surveys as well as discussion points and questions. The focus groups were moderated by IGS facilitators and attended by LMB representatives.

The telephone poll was administered by a local company, Gonzales Research and Marketing

Strategies, Inc. The LMB, IGS and Gonzales Research and Marketing collaborated on the survey questions to be asked. Apart from questions inquiring after background and demographic information, there was one question per indicator. The poll included one open-ended question to collect citizen concerns not addressed by the rest of the survey. Survey results were compared to the statistical data gathered by IGS, allowing classification of each indicator as follows:

- Statistically problematic and publicly problematic.
- Statistically problematic but not publicly problematic.
- Publicly problematic but not statistically problematic.
- Neither publicly nor statistically problematic.

This classification scheme was not intended to minimize one issue in favor of another, but rather to assist the LMB in determining the appropriate course of action in regard to specific issues. For example, if funding became available for work on one of these indicators, it might make sense to first address something that was both statistically problematic and publicly problematic, rather than something that was "only" statistically problematic. By the same token, an issue that is discovered to be publicly problematic but not statistically problematic can be addressed inexpensively and easily by simply educating the public as to the actual state of affairs. The criteria for assigning statistical importance and public importance are described in the introductions to chapters 4 and 6, respectively.

Chapter 3. A Sketch of the County

Prince George's County covers 485 square miles (including water), making it the seventh largest Maryland county. Bordered to its west by the Potomac River and the nation's capital, and to its east by the Patuxent River, the county has been in existence for over 300 years (MSA 2004). Those 300 years have seen dra-

matic changes in the county, not least in the demographic characteristics of county residents.

3.A. Historical Note

The first residents of the area between modern-day Washington, D.C. and the coast of Maryland were the Piscataway and Susquehannock Indians. Europeans arrived in Maryland in 1634, bringing African and other slaves, and farms and plantations were soon established along the Potomac and Patuxent rivers in what would become Prince George's County. The county was not officially chartered until 1696, at which time it boasted only about 1,700 residents. As other new Maryland counties and jurisdictions were formed, Prince George's County's boundaries shifted from the original charter. The most dramatic shift was in 1790, when Prince George's County ceded most of the land that was needed for the creation of Washington, D.C. "Each of the great symbols of our three branches of government — the Capitol, the White House, and the Supreme Court — stands on land that was once part of Prince George's County" (Virta 1991a). Soon thereafter, the current county seat was established in Upper Marlboro.

For most of its history, indeed well into the 20th century, the Prince George's County economy was agriculture based. Tobacco was the primary crop for more than a century; this labor-intensive crop was cultivated on so much of the county's acreage prior to the Civil War that Prince George's County had the unfortunate distinction of containing more slaves within its boundaries than did any other jurisdiction in Maryland. As county farmland began to suffer the effects of over-planting and monoculture agriculture, Prince George's County established the nation's first research agricultural college, the predecessor of today's University of Maryland, in 1859 (Virta 1991a).

The tobacco-based plantation culture of the county's early years afforded considerable leisure time to the wealthy planters who made up the upper socio-economic stratum of county

society, making possible the rich variety of cultural pursuits — theater, music, dance and sports — that Prince George's County continues to celebrate today. In particular, certain families became proficient at thoroughbred horse breeding, something the county still excels at (Virta 1991a).

Not surprisingly, the Civil War brought tremendous upheaval to Prince George's County. For one thing, numerous black communities and towns were formed by the newly freed ex-slaves. Also, the nature of agriculture in the county changed radically. Without an unpaid labor force, the largest plantations were no longer commercially viable. "Between the end of the Civil War and the turn of the century, the number of farms in Prince George's County doubled; while the average farm size decreased dramatically" (Pearl 1993).

The Civil War also forever changed the role — and size — of the federal government in nearby Washington, D.C., with significant implications for neighboring jurisdictions such as Prince George's County. Great numbers of people began to arrive in the area to take jobs in the many new or expanding federal agencies, such as the U.S. Bureau of Pensions. Many of these newcomers took up residence in Prince George's County. Between 1860 and 1900, the county's population increased 30 percent (Pearl 1993). Railroad lines were extended into the county for commuters in the late 19th century. "In towns such as Hyattsville, Takoma Park, Riverdale, Charlton Heights (now Berwyn Heights), and College Park, fine Victorian dwellings of the 1880s and 1890s still give evidence of this booming period of suburban expansion" (Pearl 1993).

The expansion of Prince George's County's commuter communities only accelerated as the 20th century brought further expansion of commuter rail lines as well as the automobile. Between 1900 and 1930, the county's population doubled, from 30,000 to 60,000, and by 1950 it had climbed to almost 200,000 (Pearl 1993).

Since 1972 the county government has consisted of a county executive and a nine-member county council. There are 27 incorporated towns and cities in Prince George's County, meaning that any effort to assess needs or provide services must be coordinated with sub-county agencies and service providers in some areas; in other areas, however, it is the county government that is the lowest level of government authority.

Prince George's County, then, is a county whose personality has changed radically over the years. Only three decades ago, it was accurate to describe Prince George's County as rural and agricultural. At the same time, the county's residents were mostly white. Today, racial and ethnic minorities are in the majority among the county's residents, comprising almost three quarters of the population, while the landscape is predominantly suburban or even urban, making the county one of only two majority-black urban/suburban jurisdictions in Maryland (Baltimore City is the other). Prince George's County is also one of the wealthier jurisdic-

tions in the U.S., compared not only to other majority-black jurisdictions but to the country as a whole. According to U.S. Census figures released in 2002, Prince George's County is in the top 10 percent (305th out of 3,141) of U.S. counties in per capita personal income and in the top 5 percent (120th out of 3,141) of U.S. counties in median household income. Meanwhile, in 2000, the county ranked in the lowest 15 percent of all U.S. counties in the rate of residents with incomes below the federal poverty line, or 2,741st out of 3,141 (IBRC 2004).

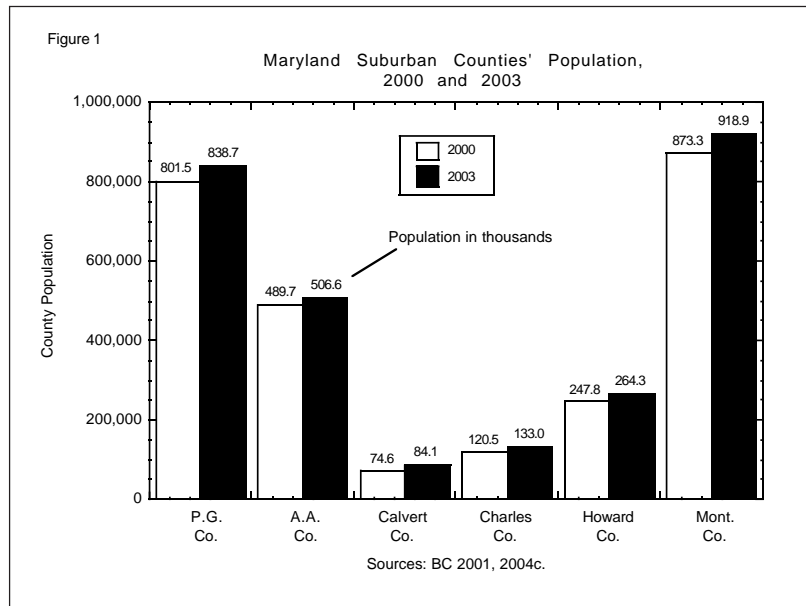


Table 2
State, Regional and County Population, 1970-2000:
Total Population by Jurisdiction

Jurisdiction	Year 1970	Year 1980	Year 1990	Year 2000	Increase 1970-2000	Increase 1990-2000
Prince George's Co.	660,567	665,071	728,553	801,515	21.3%	10.0%
Anne Arundel Co.	297,539	370,775	427,239	489,656	64.6%	14.6%
Calvert Co.	20,682	34,638	51,372	74,563	260.5%	45.1%
Charles Co.	47,678	72,751	101,154	120,546	152.8%	19.2%
Howard Co.	61,911	118,572	187,328	247,842	300.3%	32.3%
Montgomery Co.	522,809	579,053	757,027	873,341	67.1%	15.4%
Suburban Region	1,611,186	1,840,860	2,252,673	2,607,463	61.8%	15.7%
Maryland Statewide	3,922,399	4,216,975	4,780,753	5,296,486	35.0%	10.8%

Source: DOP 2004d.

Table 3

State, Regional and County Population Growth, 1990-2003:
Population in Millions

Year	Maryland (x 1 million)	P.G. Suburban Area (x 1 million)	Prince George's Co. (x 1 million)
1990	4.797	2.263	0.726
1991	4.856	2.297	0.736
1992	4.903	2.326	0.740
1993	4.943	2.358	0.743
1994	4.985	2.392	0.751
1995	5.024	2.423	0.758
1996	5.057	2.452	0.765
1997	5.093	2.482	0.770
1998	5.130	2.516	0.777
1999	5.172	2.552	0.782
2000	5.296	2.607	0.802
2001	5.383	2.669	0.818
2002	5.450	2.711	0.829
2003	5.508	2.745	0.838
Growth, 1990-2003	14.8%	21.3%	15.4%

Sources: BC 2001, 2004c; DOP 2000b.

3.B. Demographics

Prince George's is the second-largest county in the suburban region (Montgomery County, at 505 square miles, is the largest), and it has the second-largest population as well: 838,716 in 2003 (see figure 1), according to the Census Bureau (BC 2004c). During the years 1970-2000, county population grew 21.3 percent (table 2), the slowest rate of growth in the suburban region and below both the regional and statewide growth rates for the same period (61.8 percent and 35.0 percent, respectively). The next lowest 1970-2000 growth rate, Anne Arundel's, was 64.6 percent, more than triple the Prince George's rate. However, table 3 indicates that, during the years 1990-2003, the county's rate of population growth (15.4 percent) rose above the state's (14.8 percent) and nearer to the overall suburban region's rate (21.3 percent) (DOP 2004d).

3.B.1. Race

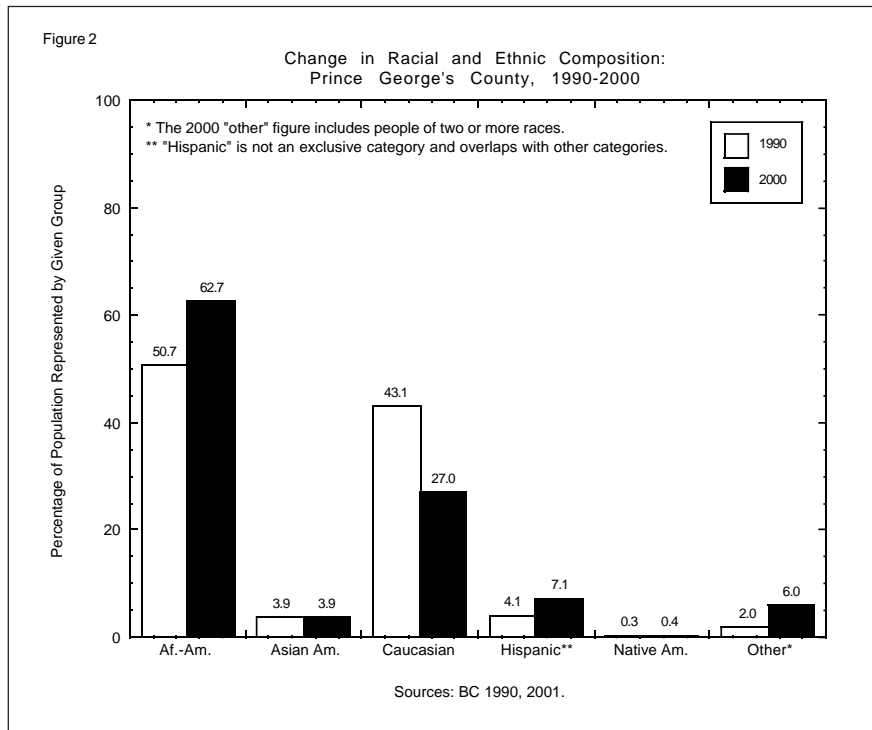
While the county's population growth in recent decades has been slow compared to that of its neighbors, the proportion of minority residents in the county's overall population has grown dramatically. Figure 2 shows the most recent changes in the racial and ethnic composition of Prince George's County. From 1990-2000, the percentage of white residents changed from 43.1 to 27.0, while the percentage of black residents grew from 50.7 to 62.7. The other racial and ethnic groups shown comprise much smaller parts of the county's population; however, this should not obscure the fact that the proportion of Hispanic county residents increased 73.2 percent, from 4.1 to 7.1 percent (BC 1990, 2001).

These striking changes in the proportion of minority residents in the population of Prince

George's County have been many years in the making, as can be seen in table 4. While minorities comprised a scant 15.0 percent of the county's population in 1970, this proportion had risen to 69.7 percent by 2000, a 364.7 percent proportional growth. Among the suburban region counties, this rate of growth was second only to that of Montgomery County (440.0 percent); however, Montgomery County began this period in 1970 with a much lower percentage of minority population (5.5 percent), and

its percentage of minority residents in 2000 (29.7 percent) was still less than half that of Prince George's County (and only third highest in the region). The county with the second-highest proportion of minority residents in 2000 was Charles County, at 30.7 percent, barely different from its 1970 percentage of 29.1 percent (DOP 2004d).

Tables 5 and 6 show changes in the county's



racial makeup in absolute numbers, also for the years 1970-2000. The number of non-white Prince George's County residents rose during these years from 99,126 to 558,994, an increase of 463.9 percent (table 5). While this was not the highest rate of increase (it was exceeded by Howard County's, at just over 1,037 percent, and Montgomery County's, at 797.6 percent), Prince George's County nonetheless had by far the most minority resi-

Table 4

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	+/- Proportion 1970-2000	+/- Proportion 1990-2000
Prince George's Co.	15.0%	41.2%	55.4%	69.7%	364.7%	25.8%
Anne Arundel Co.	11.9%	13.4%	14.0%	17.8%	49.6%	27.1%
Calvert Co.	37.4%	22.8%	16.0%	15.6%	-58.3%	-2.5%
Charles Co.	29.1%	22.0%	20.3%	30.7%	5.5%	51.2%
Howard Co.	8.6%	14.5%	16.4%	24.5%	184.9%	49.4%
Montgomery Co.	5.5%	14.4%	21.0%	29.7%	440.0%	41.4%
Suburban Region	11.8%	24.3%	30.3%	39.0%	230.5%	28.7%
Maryland Statewide	18.6%	25.1%	28.3%	34.0%	82.8%	20.1%

Source: DOP 2004d.

Table 5

State, Regional and County Minority Population, 1970-2000:
Minority Population by Jurisdiction

Jurisdiction	Year 1970	Year 1980	Year 1990	Year 2000	+/- Numbers 1970-2000	+/- Numbers 1990-2000
Prince George's Co.	99,126	273,644	403,850	558,994	463.9%	38.4%
Anne Arundel Co.	35,271	49,572	59,737	87,071	146.9%	45.8%
Calvert Co.	7,726	7,905	8,479	11,599	50.1%	36.8%
Charles Co.	13,858	15,964	20,567	37,041	167.3%	80.1%
Howard Co.	5,338	17,218	30,641	60,697	1037.1%	98.1%
Montgomery Co.	28,875	83,568	158,746	259,182	797.6%	63.3%
Suburban Region	190,194	447,871	682,020	1,014,584	433.5%	48.8%
Maryland Statewide	729,379	1,058,137	1,350,698	1,802,982	147.2%	33.5%

Source: DOP 2004d.

dents in every year described on table 5. By contrast, as shown on table 6, the number of white county residents has dropped steadily since 1970, from 561,441 to 242,521, a decrease of 56.8 percent. In every other county in the suburban region, absolute numbers of white residents increased steadily over this time period — by almost a quarter in Montgomery County (which had the lowest increase) and by 386 percent in Calvert County (DOP 2004d).

As much as the absolute numbers of whites increased in all suburban area jurisdictions except Prince George's County, it should be noted that the relative proportion of whites in most jurisdictions decreased, both 1970-2000 and 1990-2000. In fact, as can be seen on table 7, Calvert County was the only county to see an increase in its proportional share of white residents. During the years 1970-2000, the percentage of Calvert County residents who were white increased 34.8 percent, although

Table 6

State, Regional and County White Population, 1970-2000:
White Population by Jurisdiction

Jurisdiction	Year 1970	Year 1980	Year 1990	Year 2000	+/- Numbers 1970-2000	+/- Numbers 1990-2000
Prince George's Co.	561,441	391,427	324,703	242,521	-56.8%	-25.3%
Anne Arundel Co.	262,268	321,203	367,502	402,585	53.5%	9.5%
Calvert Co.	12,956	26,733	42,893	62,964	386.0%	46.8%
Charles Co.	33,820	56,787	80,587	83,505	147.0%	3.6%
Howard Co.	56,573	101,354	156,687	187,145	230.8%	19.4%
Montgomery Co.	493,934	495,485	598,281	614,159	24.3%	2.7%
Suburban Region	1,420,992	1,392,989	1,570,653	1,592,879	12.1%	1.4%
Maryland Statewide	3,193,020	3,158,838	3,430,055	3,493,504	9.4%	1.8%

Source: DOP 2004d.

Table 7

State, Regional and County Proportional White Population, 1970-2000:
White Population as Percentage of Entire Population

Jurisdiction	Year 1970	Year 1980	Year 1990	Year 2000	+/- Proportion 1970-2000	+/- Proportion 1990-2000
Prince George's Co.	85.0%	58.8%	44.6%	30.3%	-64.4%	-32.1%
Anne Arundel Co.	88.1%	86.6%	86.0%	82.2%	-6.7%	-4.4%
Calvert Co.	62.6%	77.2%	84.0%	84.4%	34.8%	0.5%
Charles Co.	70.9%	78.0%	79.7%	69.3%	-2.3%	-13.0%
Howard Co.	91.4%	85.5%	83.6%	75.5%	-17.4%	-9.7%
Montgomery Co.	94.5%	85.6%	79.0%	70.3%	-25.6%	-11.0%
Suburban Region	88.2%	75.7%	69.7%	61.0%	-30.8%	-12.5%
Maryland Statewide	81.4%	74.9%	71.7%	66.0%	-18.9%	-7.9%

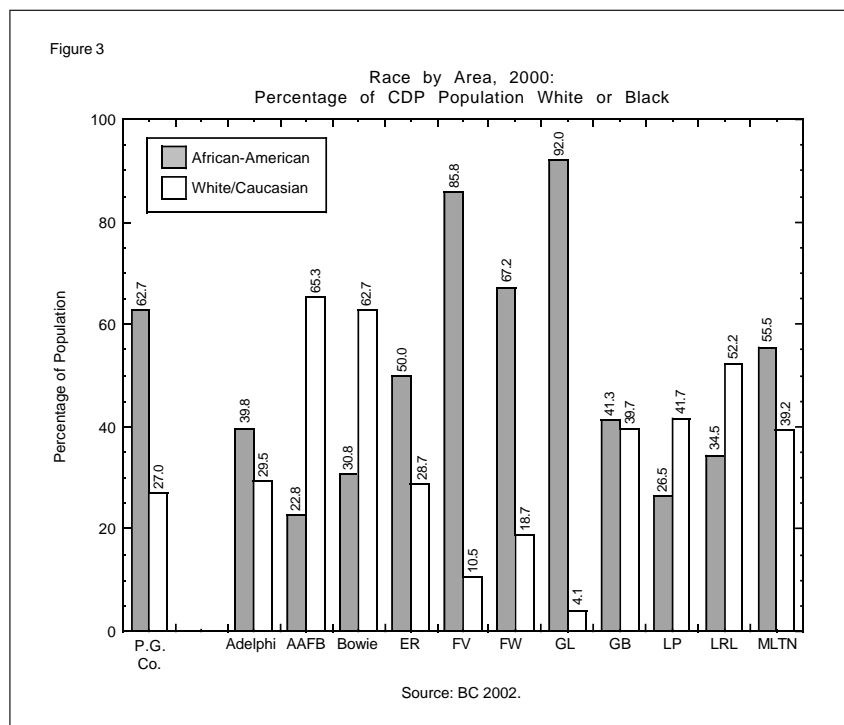
Source: DOP 2004d.

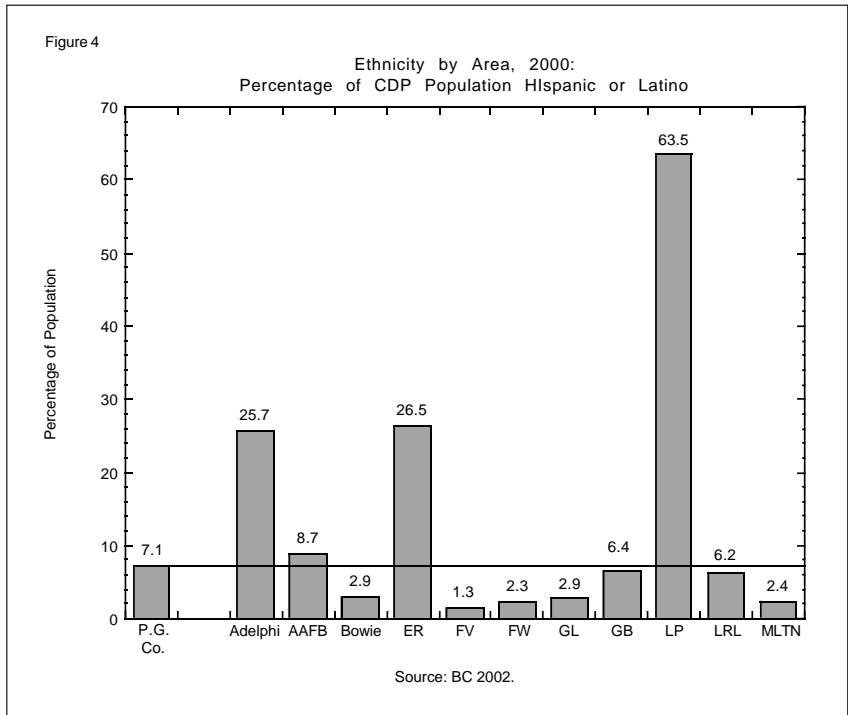
this growth has slowed considerably in more recent years: from 1990-2000, the increase in the proportion of white Calvert County residents was a mere 0.5 percent (DOP 2004d).

As already noted, Prince George's County saw the largest decreases in its proportion of white residents in both 1970-2000 and 1990-2000: 64.4 percent and 32.1 percent, respectively. The second-largest decrease 1970-2000, 25.6 percent, was in Montgomery County, although in relative terms the rate at which Montgomery County's proportion of white residents was shrinking seems to have slowed recently. During the years 1990-2000, the proportional decrease in white Montgomery County residents, 11 percent, dropped from second to third place among the suburban jurisdictions. Charles County, with a 1990-2000 decrease of 13 percent, moved into second place (DOP 2004d).

Of course, these county-level population figures

hide wide variations in the racial and ethnic makeup of the various communities that constitute Prince George's County. Figure 3 corrects this by showing the relative proportions of black and white residents living in the 11 CDPs selected for inclusion in this report. As is so often the case in many parts of the country, some communities in Prince George's County, such as Forestville, Fort Washington and Greater Landover, are relatively homoge-





The CDP with the most closely matched proportions of black and white residents is Greenbelt, where 41.3 percent of residents are black and 39.7 percent are white. Four of the selected CDPs are majority white: Andrews Air Force Base (65.3 percent white; 22.8 percent black); Bowie (62.7 percent white; 30.8 percent black); Langley Park (41.7 percent white; 26.5 percent black); and Laurel (52.2 percent white; 34.5 percent black) (BC 2002).

Beginning with the 2000 census, the U.S. Census Bureau started using

nous (and since Prince George's County is majority African-American, they are homogeneously black). Forestville residents are 85.8 percent black and 10.5 percent white; Fort Washington residents are 67.2 percent black and 18.7 percent white; and, in the largest disparity seen in any of the selected CDPs, Greater Landover residents are 92.0 percent black and 4.1 percent white (BC 2002).

Hispanic as an ethnic term rather than a racial one, meaning that people identifying themselves as white, African-American or any other race could also identify themselves as Hispanic. For this reason, proportions of Hispanic residents in the selected CDPs are presented separately in figure 4. As can be seen, Langley Park leads the CDPs in the percentage of residents who identify themselves

Table 8

Child Population Trends by County and Year, 1995-2003:
Number of Children Aged 0-17 by Jurisdiction

Jurisdiction	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	+/- %
Prince George's Co.	198,790	201,920	198,900	198,670	199,260	214,602	218,711	221,485	221,145	11.25%
Anne Arundel Co.	112,110	113,150	112,380	119,800	122,470	123,636	124,864	125,871	124,796	11.32%
Calvert Co.	18,600	19,550	20,020	20,440	21,530	22,056	22,517	22,615	22,725	22.18%
Charles Co.	31,740	32,340	32,740	35,230	36,710	34,651	35,390	36,040	N/A	13.55%
Howard Co.	58,590	60,990	61,570	61,050	64,700	69,543	70,778	71,507	71,566	22.15%
Montgomery Co.	202,280	202,630	200,490	199,450	207,170	221,758	226,676	229,503	230,484	13.94%
Suburban Region	622,110	630,580	626,100	634,640	651,840	686,246	698,936	707,021	670,716	13.61%
Maryland Statewide	1,271,98	1,286,190	1,268,550	1,287,190	1,309,430	1,356,172	1,369,311	1,379,925	1,370,686	7.78%

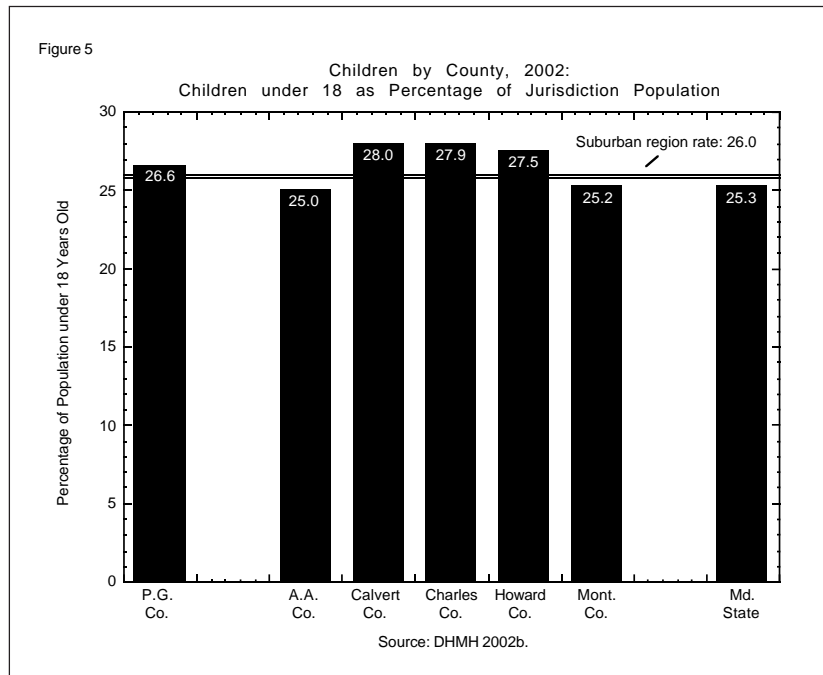
Source: BC 2001, 2003a; DHMH 1995, 1996, 1997, 1998, 1999, 2000, 2001, 2002b, table 2A.

as Hispanic, 63.5 percent. East Riverdale and Adelphi are closely matched for second place, with 26.5 percent and 25.7 percent of their residents identifying as Hispanic, respectively. Andrews Air Force Base comes next, with 8.7 percent, followed by Greenbelt (6.4 percent) and Laurel (6.2 percent). Forestville, which was described above as 85.8 percent black, has the lowest proportion of Hispanic residents out of all of the selected CDPs, 1.3 percent. Countywide, 7.1 percent of residents identified themselves as Hispanic in 2000 (BC 2002).

3.B.2. Youth

Given the purposes of this report, the characteristics of Prince George's County residents under the age of 18 are of particular interest. Table 8 compares the youth populations of the suburban area jurisdictions, 1995-2003.

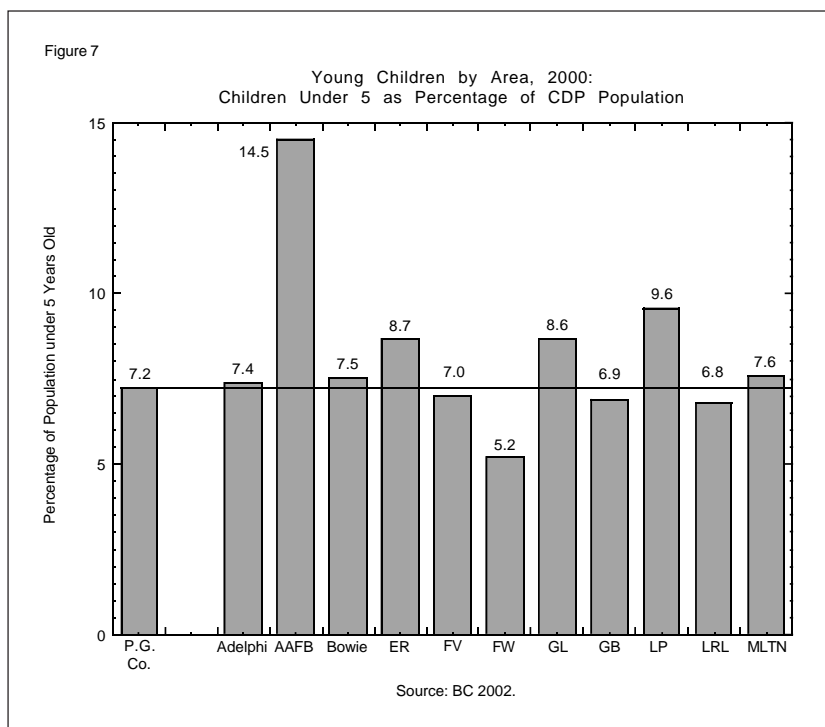
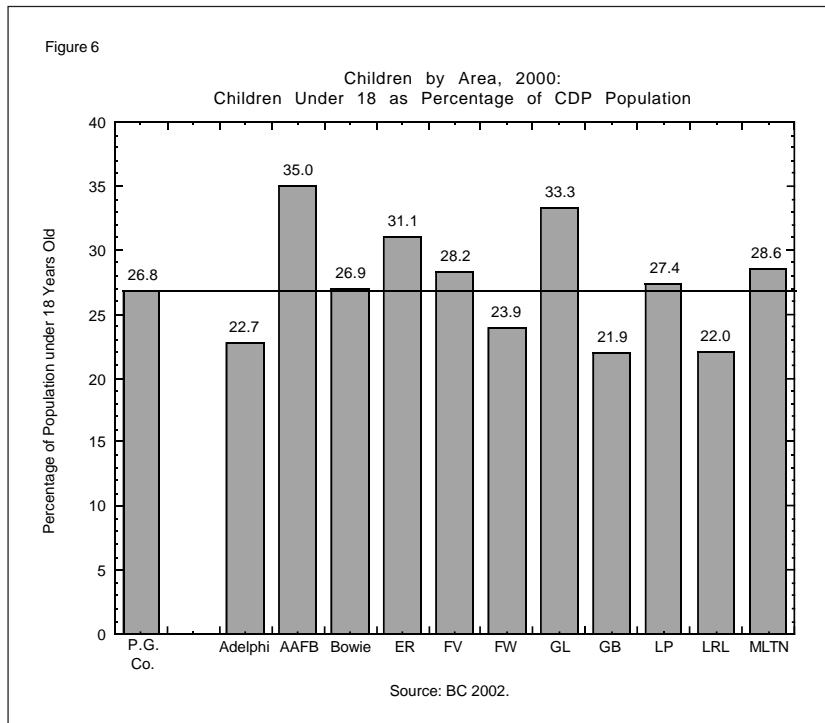
In 2003 (the most recent data available), Montgomery County had the largest number of residents ages 0-17 (230,484) in the suburban region. Prince George's County was in second place with 221,145, followed rather more distantly by Anne Arundel County (125,871). In the case of Prince George's County, there had been an 11.3 percent increase over the 1995 number (198,790), which was the slowest rate of increase in the suburban region. The jurisdiction with the highest rate of increase was Howard County (22.2 percent), followed by Calvert County (21.18 percent) and Charles County (13.6 percent). Looked at another way, however, Prince George's County's rate of increase (11.3 percent) was very similar to those of Anne Arundel, Charles and Montgomery counties (11.3 percent, 13.6 percent and 13.9 percent, respectively), while the rates of increase in Calvert and Howard coun-



ties (22.1 percent and 21.6 percent) were anomalously higher (BC 2001, 2003a; DHMH 1995, 1996, 1997, 1998, 1999, 2000, 2001, 2002b, table 2A).

Despite the relatively low rate of increase in its 0-17 population, Prince George's has the fourth-highest percentage (26.6 percent) of children under 18 among all of the suburban region jurisdictions, as can be seen on figure 5. Calvert and Charles counties are nearly tied for the highest percentage (28.0 and 27.9 percent, respectively), followed in third place by Howard County's 27.5 percent. The Prince George's County rate exceeds both the suburban region's rate (26.0 percent) and the statewide rate (25.3 percent) (DHMH 2002b).

Figure 6 shows the relative size of the populations of 0-17 year olds in the Prince George's County CDPs selected for study in this report. Among these CDPs, the percentage of Bowie residents who are under 18, 26.9 percent, is the most similar to the countywide rate of 26.8 percent; other CDPs with juvenile population rates similar to the county as a whole are Forestville (28.2 percent), Fort Washington (23.9 percent), Langley Park (27.4 percent) and Marlton (28.6 percent). These CDPs occupy something of a middle ground when compared with the other selected CDPs: Andrews



Air Force Base (35.0 percent) represents the upper end of the range and Greenbelt (21.9 percent) the lower (BC 2002).

Even more detail on local-level youth populations is available from figure 7, which focuses on those residents of the selected CDPs that are under the age of 5. In all but one CDP, the percentage of CDP residents under 5 is similar

(within two and a half percentage points) to the countywide percentage (7.2 percent). The exception, a striking one, is Andrews Air Force Base (AAFB), where 14.5 percent of residents are under 5 years old. This is not as anomalous as it seems, however, when one considers that Andrews Air Force Base is home to military members and their families, i.e., to working-age people who are much more likely to have a young child at home than are the retirees and parents of grown children who would constitute part of the population in any other neighborhood. Aside from AAFB, the CDP with the highest percentage of 0-4 year-olds is Langley Park, with 9.6 percent. Three additional CDPs are above the countywide average: Marlton (7.6 percent); East Riverdale (8.7 percent); and Greater Landover (8.6 percent). The CDP with the lowest proportion of 0-4 year-olds among its residents, 5.2 percent, is Fort Washington (BC 2002).

Just as the Prince George's population has the fourth-highest proportion of children under 18 among the suburban area jurisdictions, figure 8 shows that Prince George's County has the

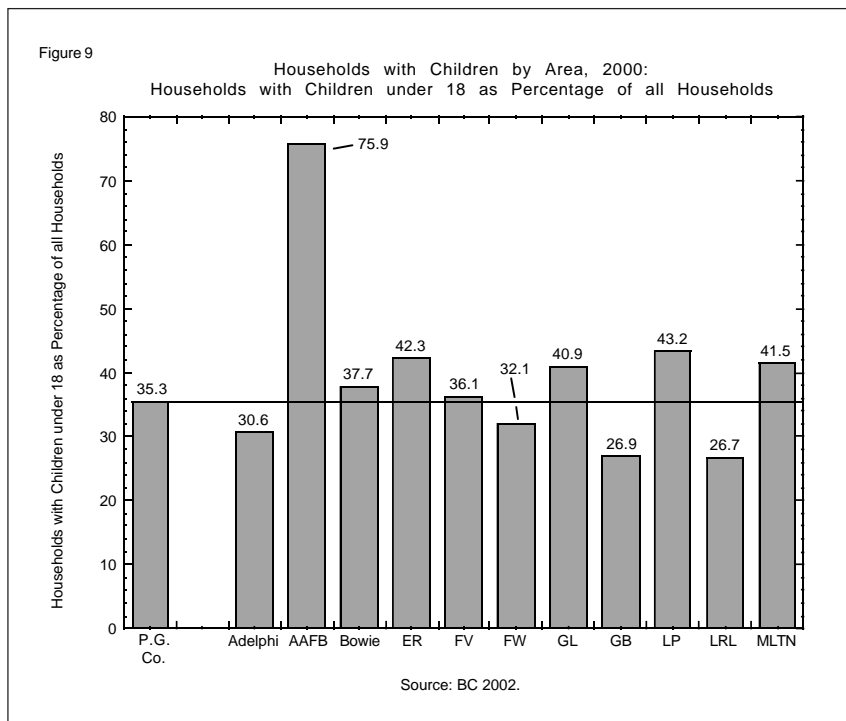
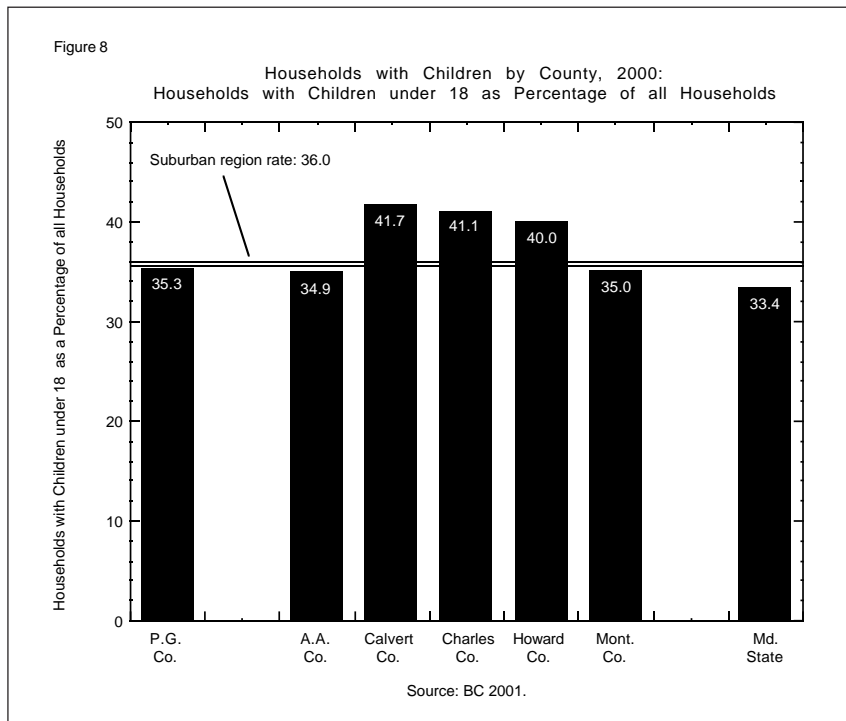
fourth-highest percentage of households with children under 18 (35.3 percent) as well. Once again, Calvert and Charles counties have the highest percentages (41.7 and 41.1 percent, respectively). However, the rate of Prince George's County households with children under 18 is lower than the overall regional and statewide rates (36.0 and 33.4 percent, respec-

tively). Anne Arundel County, where only 34.9 percent of households include members under 18, had the lowest proportion (BC 2001). The corresponding sub-county numbers are shown in figure 9. AAFB has by far the highest proportion of households with children — over three quarters of households in this CDP have children under 18 living at home.

3.B.3. Economics

As much as Prince George's County can be said to be experiencing positive new developments on the economic front, such as the recent boom in mid-level and luxury housing development, it is nonetheless true that some residents experience significant financial hardships.

The story of the county's economic condition begins with table 9, which compares per capita incomes in the suburban region during the years 1970-2002 (all amounts are in constant 2000 dollars). Prince George's County, with a per capita income of \$29,275 in 2002, ranked lowest among the suburban area jurisdictions, as well as lower than the suburban area as a whole and the state of Maryland. The highest per capita income in 2002 was in Montgomery County (\$49,690), followed by Howard County (\$43,654). Calvert County's per capita income of \$31,429 came closest to the Prince George's County amount (DOP 2004a, 2004b, 2004c, 2004d; NASA 2004).



Prince George's also had the slowest rate of growth in per capita income 1970-2000, 62.4 percent. Anne Arundel and Calvert led in this indicator, with growth rates of 131.4 percent and 130.2 percent, respectively. The regional growth rate (98.0 percent) and the statewide growth rate (98.8 percent) were almost identical over during this time period (DOP 2004a, 2004b, 2004c, 2004d; NASA 2004).

Table 9

State, Regional and County Per Capita Income, 1970-2002:
In Constant 2000 Dollars

Per Capita Income	Year 1970	Year 1980	Year 1990	Year 2000	Year 2001	Year 2002	Growth 70-00	Growth 00-02
Prince George's Co.	17,769	20,291	27,294	28,863	28,829	29,275	62.4%	1.4%
Anne Arundel Co.	15,755	21,911	28,303	36,463	37,148	37,709	131.4%	3.4%
Calvert Co.	13,590	19,302	27,087	31,283	31,766	31,429	130.2%	0.5%
Charles Co.	14,080	19,100	25,894	30,753	30,853	30,970	118.4%	0.7%
Howard Co.	19,224	27,939	35,015	43,648	43,411	43,654	127.0%	0.0%
Montgomery Co.	24,930	29,938	40,358	49,642	49,503	49,690	99.1%	0.1%
Suburban Region	19,603	24,083	32,451	38,819	39,003	39,480	98.0%	1.7%
Maryland Statewide	17,235	21,482	28,389	34,257	34,545	34,858	98.8%	1.8%

Sources: DOP 2004a, 2004b, 2004c, 2004d; NASA 2004.

It was not always the case that Prince George's County had the lowest per capita income in the region. In 1970, in fact, as table 9 also shows, the county had the area's third-highest income level, at \$17,769. Though Prince George's had slipped to fourth place by 1980, it did not fall into last place until some point between 1990 and 2000 (Maryland Department of Planning data for this indicator

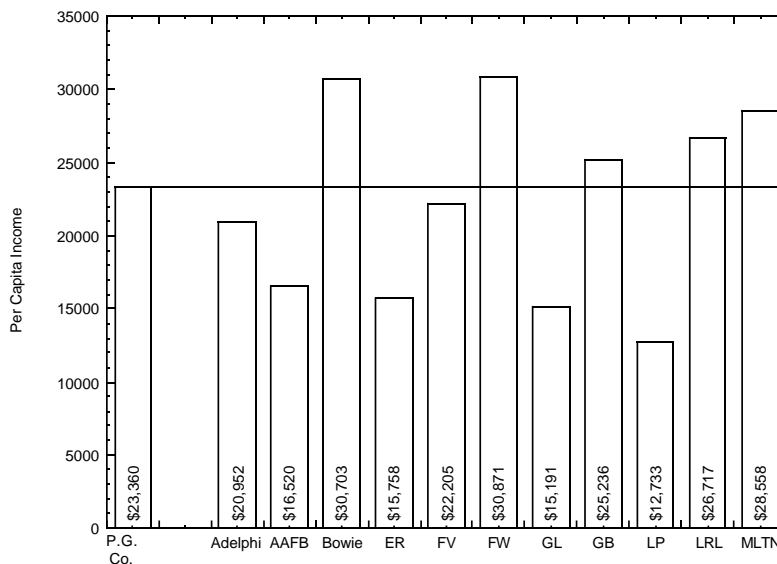
are presented in 10-year increments so no more precision is possible). As well, the most recent data included in table 9 offer some hope for improved prospects: for the years 2000-2002, Prince George's County showed the second-highest rate of growth in per capita income; at 1.4 percent, the county's rate was second only to that of Anne Arundel County (3.4 percent), and it was only slightly lower

than the regional and statewide rates 2000-2002 (1.7 and 1.8 percent, respectively). Data gathered during such a short time period can only hint at trends, not prove them, but one may hope that this recent upswing augurs well for the county's economic future (DOP 2004a, 2004b, 2004c, 2004d; NASA 2004).

As with other demographic categories, the countywide figures for per capita income conceal considerable variation within the county, as figure 10 shows.

Figure 10

Income by Area, 2000:
Per Capita Income by CDP

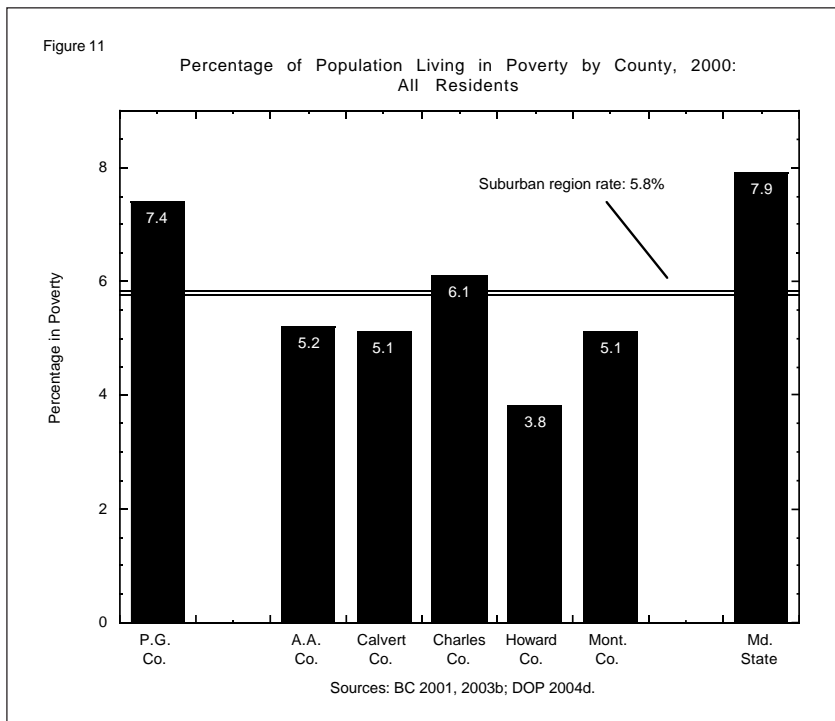


Source: BC 2002.

Among the selected CDPs, Forestville's per capita income of \$22,205 comes closest to the countywide per capita income of \$23,360. Fort Washington and Bowie have the highest incomes among the CDPs, \$30,703 and \$30,871, respectively, while incomes drop as low as \$12,733 in Langley Park. In fact, in addition to Langley Park, three more of the selected CDPs have per capita incomes below \$20,000: Greater Landover (\$15,191); East Riverdale (\$15,758); and Andrews Air Force Base (\$16,520) (BC 2002).

Andrews Air Force Base represents something of a special case, however, since enlisted people's military salaries do not include the housing and meals that are part of a military member's remuneration. While some of the newest enlistees in any branch of the U.S. military receive less than \$15,000 per year in apparent salary, these soldiers, sailors and airmen are also relieved of the necessity of paying for their housing, which is either provided directly by the military branch in question, or is paid for out of a tax-exempt allowance received by the member. Enlisted members are also either provided or compensated (tax free) for three meals per day (DOD 2005). When one also considers the free and ready access to health care and a variety of other services provided to military members and their dependents, it becomes clear that the per capita income of around \$16,000 in Andrews Air Force Base is not nearly as worrisome as it would be in a more typical CDP — not nearly as worrisome, for example, as the state of affairs in the other three selected CDPs (mentioned above) where per capita incomes are below \$20,000.

Though low by national standards (which are



not adjusted for purchasing power), by Maryland suburban standards a relatively high percentage of Prince George's County residents — the highest of any county in the suburban area — have incomes lower than the federal poverty level, or just over \$19,000 per year for a family of four, a circumstance that seems to disproportionately affect county children under 18. In fact, while only 7.4 percent of the county's population as a whole (see figure 11) lives in poverty, 10.6 percent of county residents ages 17 and under live in poverty (see figure 12). Prince George's County, then, has not only the highest rates of overall and child poverty in the suburban region, but also the largest discrepancy between the percentage of children in poverty and the percentage of all residents in poverty. This means that, while children throughout the five suburban area jurisdictions are disproportionately affected by poverty, Prince George's County children are most disproportionately affected of all (BC 2003b; DOP 2004d).

Charles County has the second-highest percentage of its population living in poverty, 6.1 percent, while Anne Arundel, at 5.2 percent, is third. The county with the lowest general poverty rate is Howard, once again, with only 3.8 percent of its population living below the

Figure 12

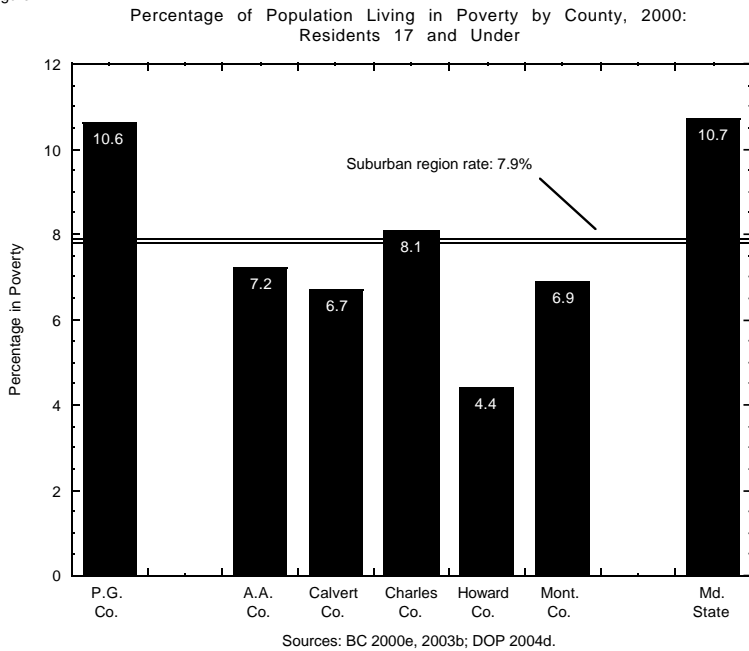
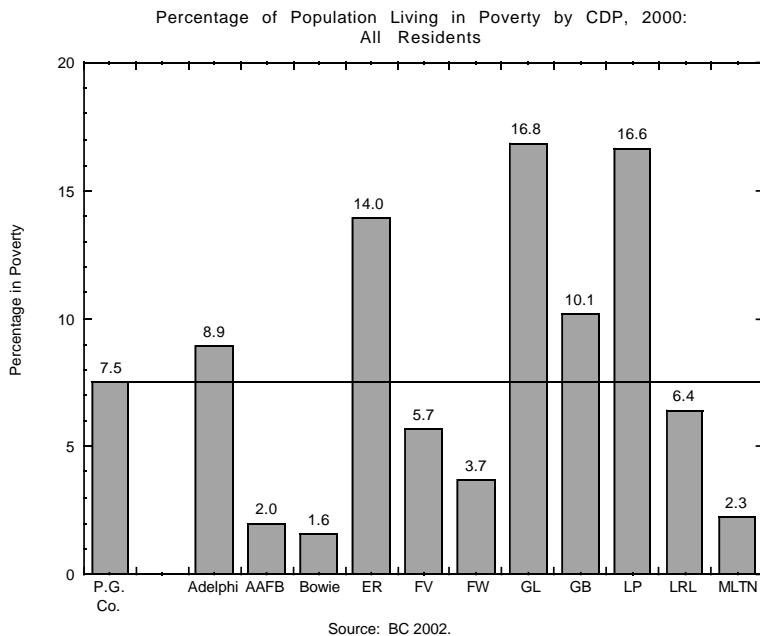


Figure 13



federal poverty line. The suburban region rate is 5.8 percent, while the state rate is 7.9 percent (BC 2000e, 2003b; DOP 2004d).

The ranking of suburban area jurisdictions by their respective rates of child poverty is identical to the general poverty ranking above: Charles County is also second highest among the suburban area jurisdictions in child poverty

ty (8.1 percent), followed by Anne Arundel County (7.2 percent). Howard County has the lowest child poverty rate of all: 4.4 percent. The suburban region's rate, at 7.9 percent, is substantially lower than that of Maryland as a whole (10.7 percent) (BC 2000e, 2003b; DOP 2004d).

At the local level, the poverty rate in some of the selected CDPs is quite different from the countywide rate of 7.5 percent, as can be seen in figure 13. Three CDPs have poverty rates that are less than a third of the county's: Bowie (1.6 percent); Andrews Air Force Base (2.0 percent); and Marlton (2.3 percent). (Andrews Air Force Base's low poverty rate may be explained by the relatively higher number of single, childless younger adults residing there; the federal poverty line for a single person in 2004 was just over \$9,000, an amount guaranteed to be exceeded by the salary of even the most junior military member.) At the opposite end of the spectrum, the residents of another three CDPs experience poverty at rates close to double that of the countywide rate: East

Riverdale (14.0 percent); Greater Landover (16.8 percent); and Langley Park (16.6 percent) (BC 2002).

The child poverty rates in the selected CDPs are similar to the general poverty rates (see figure 14). The three CDPs that have the lowest general poverty also have the lowest child

poverty rates: Andrews Air Force Base (2.8 percent); Bowie (1.1 percent); and Marlton (2.7 percent) (BC 2002). Again, the low child poverty rate in AAFB may be the result of the fact that military members essentially receive more money for each additional child, making it unlikely that any military member with a spouse and two children would earn less than the federal poverty level for a family of four of around \$19,000.

The three CDPs with the highest general poverty rates also have the highest child poverty rates: East Riverdale (16.9 percent), Greater Landover (22.4 percent) and Langley Park (21.3 percent). While county youth tend to be at greater risk of poverty than county residents as a whole, this is not the case in three of the selected CDPs, where the child poverty rates are actually lower than the general poverty rates: Adelphi (child: 6.7 percent; all: 8.9 percent); Bowie (child 1.1 percent; all: 1.6 percent); and Greenbelt (child: 8.2 percent; all: 10.1 percent) (BC 2002). Further study may be warranted into what exactly shields youth in these CDPs from the poverty that would be more likely to affect them elsewhere.

Of course, there can be little hope of protecting youth — or anyone else — from poverty without enough jobs to go around. As figure 15 shows, Prince George's County residents are

Figure 14

Percentage of Population Living in Poverty by County, 2000:
Residents 17 and Under

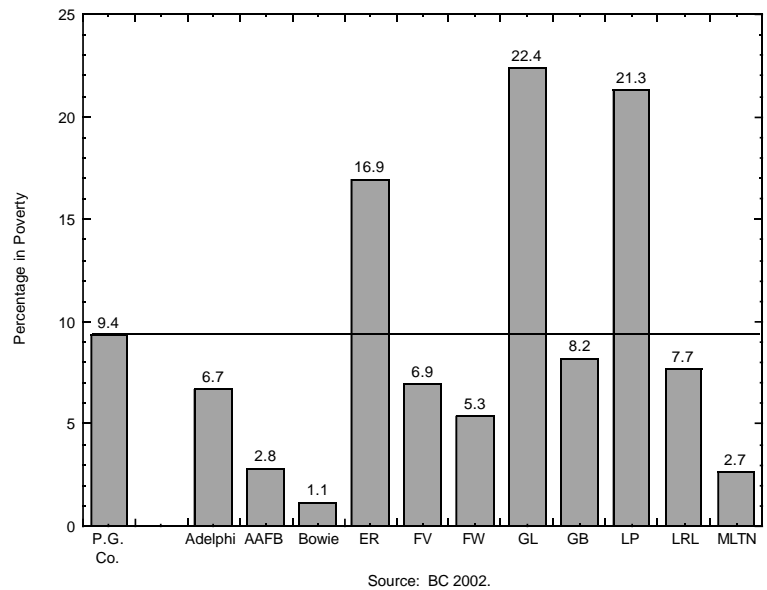
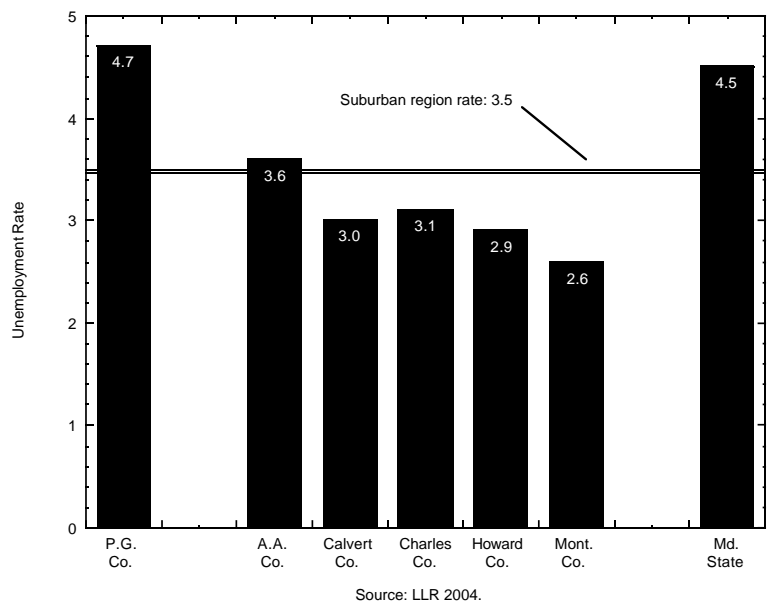


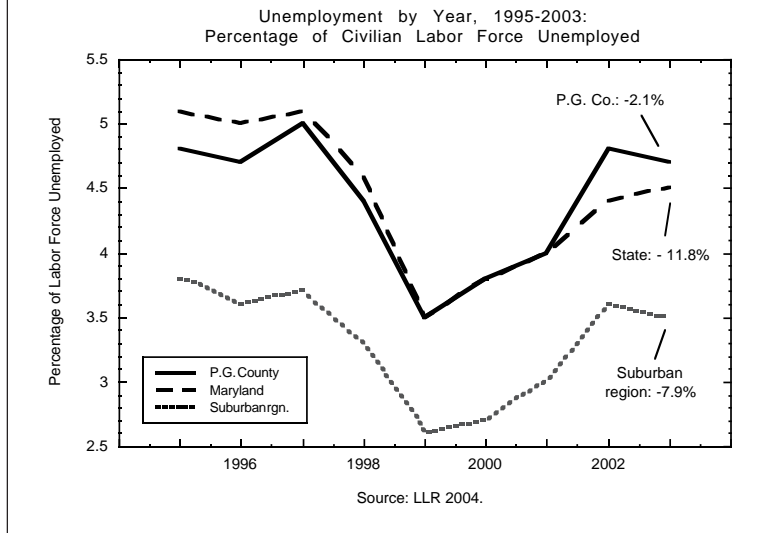
Figure 15

Unemployment by County, 2003:
Percentage of Civilian Labor Force Unemployed



not always successful at obtaining work, although the countywide situation is not dire in absolute terms: while Prince George's County had the highest unemployment rate in the region in 2003 — i.e., 4.7 percent of the civilian labor force unemployed — economists do not generally become concerned until unemployment rates exceed 6 percent or fall below 4 percent (LLR 2004). This is not to dis-

Figure 16



count the very real frustrations and even risks to health and home faced by those individuals represented by any unemployment rate, no matter how unobjectionable it may be in macroeconomic terms. And of course, as discussed in more detail below, the countywide unemployment rate of 4.7 percent obscures the much higher and much lower unemployment rates in various localities throughout the county. (The unemployment rate is measured through telephone surveys and counts those people 16 and over who have not worked at all in the previous week but who sought work in the previous four weeks. As such, a worker who cannot find work in his or her field but who worked one hour or more at the local video store is considered employed, while unemployed people who have grown discouraged with the job hunt and have not actively sought employment in the four weeks prior to the survey will be counted as neither unemployed nor part of the labor force [BLS 2004]).

Montgomery County had the region's lowest unemployment rate (2.6 percent), followed closely by Howard County (2.9 percent). The jurisdiction whose rate most closely approached that of Prince George's County was Anne Arundel County (3.6 percent). And while Anne Arundel and Prince George's counties both exceeded the rate for the suburban region as a whole, Prince George's County alone exceeded the statewide unemployment

rate for 2003 (LLR 2004).

Prince George's County's exceeding the statewide unemployment rate is a relatively recent development, as can be seen from figure 16. From 1995-1999, Prince George's County's unemployment rate was below the statewide rate, but by a gradually decreasing amount. From 1999-2001, the two rates were essentially identical. It has only been since 2001 that the Prince George's unemployment rate has climbed above that of Maryland as a whole. And though the Prince George's County, statewide and regional unemployment rates are all lower than they were in 1995 (by -2.1 percent, -11.8 percent and -7.9 percent, respectively), all three of these areas have seen a marked increase in unemployment rates since 1999 that has only recently — and only slightly — turned downward for both Prince George's County and the suburban region. The statewide unemployment rate, meanwhile, continued to climb through 2003 (LLR 2004).

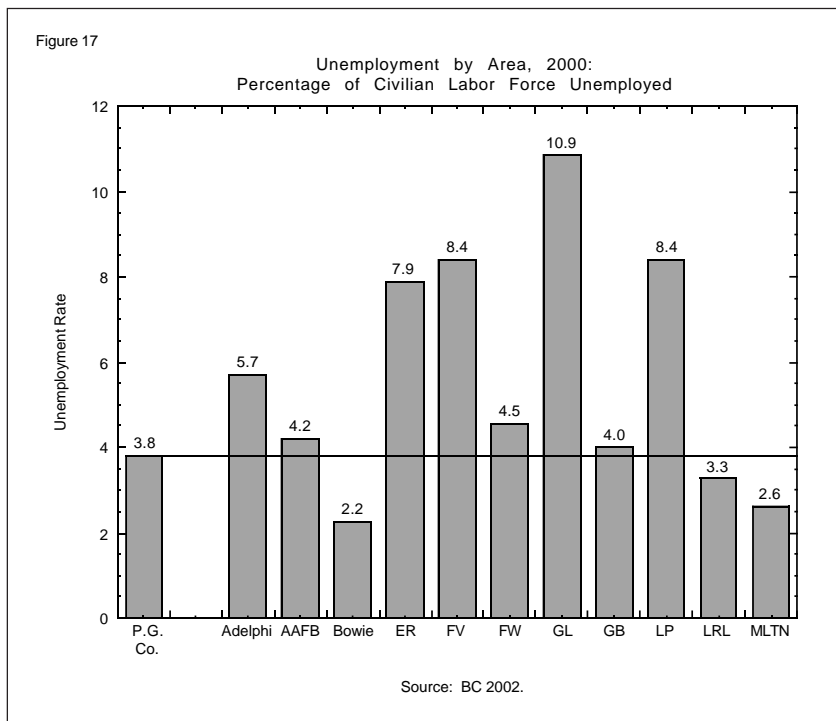
While the countywide unemployment rate cannot be said to represent an emergency level of joblessness, the picture is quite different in some of the CDPs selected for further study in this report (see figure 17). The most desperate circumstance among these CDPs is in Greater Landover, where more than 1 out of 10 members of the labor force was unemployed and actively seeking work in 2000 (the most recent year for which local-level data are available). Other CDPs with markedly elevated unemployment rates were Forestville and Langley Park, both with 8.4 percent unemployment, and East Riverdale, where the unemployment rate was 7.9 percent. Those CDPs with lower unemployment rates included Greenbelt (4.0 percent); Laurel (3.3 percent); Marlton (2.6 percent); and Bowie (2.2 percent) (BC 2002). Though these figures are from several years ago, unemployment has worsened in the county in the intervening years, and so it is likely

that the situation has similarly worsened in at least some of these areas.

County residents seeking employment are most likely to find it in service jobs. It is the retail sector that employs the largest share (15.5 percent) of Prince George's residents (see table 10a). The next most significant job providers are construction (11.8 percent), professional/technical/scientific services (10.2 percent) and health care/social assistance (10.0 percent). These are the top four employers statewide as well, although Prince George's County has a substantially larger proportion of construction workers and a substantially smaller proportion of health care/social assistance workers than does Maryland overall (BC 2004a). As is the case for the state as a whole, most of the businesses in Prince George's are small (figure 10b), but less so than statewide. Those employing only 1-4 employees represent 47.9 percent of the businesses in the county, as compared to 52.7 percent statewide (BC 2004a).

Another gauge of poverty and its effects on children are the numbers of public school students receiving free or reduced-price meals at school. Free and reduced-price (F/RP) school meals are provided through a federal program that uses family income levels to determine eligibility. To receive reduced-price meals through this program, family income must be no more than 185 percent of the federal poverty level; for free meals, no more than 130 percent (FNS 2004). Since participation is voluntary, some eligible families may choose not to participate, meaning that the F/RP measure may understate poverty in a given community.

Tables 11 and 12 show the history of both the number and percentage of public school stu-



dents receiving F/RP meals in the suburban area jurisdictions, 1995-2004.

In 2004, as table 11 shows, 61,914 Prince George's County students received F/RP school meals, close to half of the county's 136,934 students enrolled in public school that year, or 45.2 percent (see table 12). Prince George's County had by far the highest percentage of students receiving F/RP meals in any of the suburban jurisdictions, followed in descending order by Montgomery (24.0 percent), Charles (20.1 percent), Anne Arundel (17.6 percent), Calvert (12.9 percent) and Howard counties (6.1 percent) (MSDE 2004b).

The number of Prince George's County students receiving F/RP meals in 2004 represented a 31.7 percent increase since 1995, the second-highest increase among the suburban area jurisdictions. The highest increase, 36.1 percent, was in Montgomery County, followed in decreasing order by Anne Arundel (27.6 percent), Calvert (20.9 percent) and Charles (14.2 percent) counties. Howard County was the only jurisdiction that saw a decrease in the number of students who received F/RP meals, albeit a small one of only 3.6 percent (MSDE 2004b).

Table 10a

Employment Type in Prince George's County & Maryland, 2002:
Proportion Employed in Named Sector as a Percentage of Jurisdiction's Work Force

Sector	P.G. Co.	Md.
Forestry, fishing, hunting & agricultural support	0.04	0.05
Mining	0.10	0.09
Utilities	0.39	0.53
Construction	11.76	7.90
Manufacturing	4.13	7.05
Wholesale trade	5.74	4.53
Retail trade	15.53	14.00
Transportation & warehousing	3.90	2.58
Information	3.92	3.26
Finance & insurance	4.03	5.76
Real estate, rental & leasing	2.33	2.25
Professional, scientific & technical services	10.18	9.61
Management of companies & enterprises	2.44	2.66
Administration, support, waste management & remediation services	8.10	6.93
Educational services	1.45	2.97
Health care & social assistance	10.04	13.43
Arts, entertainment & recreation	0.88	1.42
Accommodation & food services	8.53	8.46
Other services (except public administration)	6.46	5.61
Auxiliaries (except corporate, subsidiary & regional management)	0.25	0.90
Unclassified	0.04	0.01

Table 10b

Employment Type in Prince George's County & Maryland, 2002:
Named Business Size as a Percentage of all Business Establishments in Jurisdiction

Business Size	P.G. Co.	Md.
1-4 employees	47.90	52.71
5-9 employees	19.73	19.43
10-19 employees	14.69	13.15
20-49 employees	10.66	9.04
50-99 employees	3.74	3.12
100-249 employees	2.49	1.92
250-499 employees	0.59	0.43
500-999 employees	0.13	0.11
1,000 or more employees	0.06	0.08

Source: BC 2004a.

These increases in the number of students receiving F/RP meals came during a time of increases in overall public school enrollment in all of the suburban jurisdictions, as a quick glance ahead at table 20 will show. However,

in most cases, the percentage increases in numbers of students receiving F/RP meals were greater than the percentage increases in school enrollment, suggesting that — in such cases — increasing proportions of new stu-

Table 11

Free/Reduced Price School Meal Trends by County and Year, 1995-2004:
Number of Children Receiving Service by Jurisdiction

Jurisdiction	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	+/- %
Prince George's Co.	47,011	50,421	52,148	53,036	51,089	53,894	57,647	59,872	63,313	61,914	31.7%
Anne Arundel Co.	10,134	10,821	11,318	12,049	12,149	11,440	12,079	9,930	11,638	12,926	27.6%
Calvert Co.	1,844	1,917	2,053	2,152	2,116	2,052	1,783	2,052	2,119	2,230	20.9%
Charles Co.	4,508	4,744	4,806	4,726	4,939	4,448	4,060	5,065	4,934	5,146	14.2%
Howard Co.	2,979	3,405	3,887	4,252	4,327	4,242	4,213	4,305	3,531	2,870	-3.6%
Montgomery Co.	24,492	25,721	27,169	27,944	28,773	30,945	30,475	31,552	32,881	33,345	36.1%
Suburban Region	90,968	97,029	101,381	104,159	103,393	107,021	110,257	112,776	118,416	118,431	30.2%
Maryland Statewide	240,623	249,611	253,010	257,030	256,622	247,282	254,830	260,828	268,582	272,966	13.4%

Source: MSDE 2004b.

dents come from families with lower incomes. Prince George's County, for example, saw almost two times the percentage increase in students receiving F/RP meals (31.7 percent, on table 11) than it saw in overall enrollment (15.6 percent, on table 20). Prince George's County did not see the largest such discrepancy, however: Anne Arundel County, where, as mentioned above, there was a 27.6 percent increase in the number of students receiving F/RP meals, saw only a 3.8 percent increase in overall enrollment. Only two counties saw a greater percentage increase in enrollment than in students receiving F/RP meals: Calvert County (F/RP increase: 20.9 percent; enrollment increase: 35.1 percent) and Howard County, where the number of students receiving F/RP meals decreased 3.6 percent and where enrollment increased 31.2 percent (MSDE 2004b).

The proportional change in numbers of students receiving F/RP school meals in the suburban jurisdictions, 1995-2004, can be seen more clearly in table 12. As the table shows, the percentage of Prince George's County students receiving F/RP school meals expanded from 39.7 percent in 1995 to 45.2 percent in

2004, a 13.9 percent proportional increase. But the 1995-2004 increase conceals an even more significant one, more recent and over a shorter period of time: the percentage of county students who received this service was actually lower in 1999 (39.2 percent) than it was in 1995, meaning that, since 1999, the proportional increase in percentage of students receiving F/RP meals was an even larger 15.3 percent. Still, Prince George's County was not the jurisdiction with the largest proportional increase. In fact, it came in third, preceded by Anne Arundel and Montgomery counties, where the proportional increases in the percentage of the student body receiving F/RP meals were 22.2 and 14.8 percent, respectively. Two jurisdictions saw decreases in the proportions of their students receiving this service: Calvert County (10.4 percent decrease) and Howard County (25.6 percent decrease). The Prince George's County proportional increase in percentage of students receiving F/RP meals was just larger than that of the suburban area as a whole (11.2 percent) but more than three times higher than the statewide increase of 4.3 percent (MSDE 2004b).

Table 12

Free/Reduced Price School Meal Trends by County and Year, 1995-2004:
Percentage of Children Receiving Service by Jurisdiction

Jurisdiction	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	+/- %
Prince George's Co.	39.7	41.2	41.7	41.3	39.2	41.0	43.0	44.4	46.3	45.2	13.9%
Anne Arundel Co.	14.4	15.2	15.6	16.4	16.4	15.7	16.5	13.5	15.8	17.6	22.2%
Calvert Co.	14.4	14.2	14.5	14.6	13.9	13.1	11.0	12.3	12.4	12.9	-10.4%
Charles Co.	22.1	22.6	22.7	21.9	22.2	19.6	17.4	21.2	20.0	20.1	-9.0%
Howard Co.	8.2	9.1	10.0	10.6	10.3	9.7	9.4	9.4	7.6	6.1	-25.6%
Montgomery Co.	20.9	21.4	22.2	22.4	22.5	23.5	22.7	23.0	23.7	24.0	14.8%
Suburban Region	24.2	25.1	25.7	25.8	25.1	25.6	25.9	26.1	27.1	26.9	11.2%
Maryland Statewide	30.4	31.0	30.9	30.9	30.5	29.4	30.0	30.5	31.2	31.7	4.3%

Source: MSDE 2004b.

Among the CDPs selected for closer study in this report, percentages of students receiving F/RP meals varied widely, with the countywide rate of 45.2 percent close to the midpoint between the highest and lowest extremes (see figure 18). Most positively, four CDPs had F/RP rates lower not only than the county rate (45.2 percent) but the suburban area rate (26.9

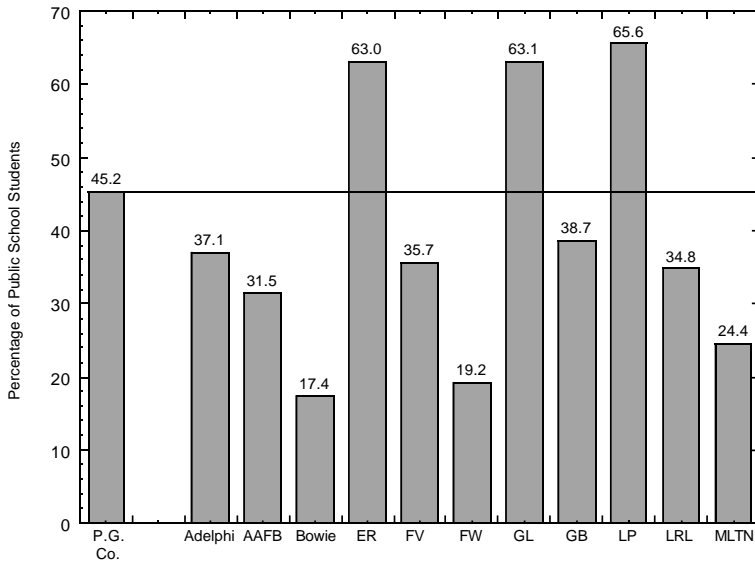
percent), as well. These were Bowie (17.4 percent); Fort Washington (19.2 percent); Marlton (24.4 percent); and Andrews Air Force Base (25.7 percent). Much higher percentages of students were receiving F/RP meals in the following CDPs: Adelphi (65.9 percent); East Riverdale (63.0 percent); Greater Landover (63.1 percent); and Langley Park (65.6 percent).

These were the CDPs with relatively higher rates of poverty and child poverty as well (see figures 13 and 14), but the F/RP meal percentages are much higher (the highest poverty and child poverty rates, in Greater Landover, were only 16.8 and 22.4 percent, respectively), suggesting that the poverty figures may disguise the true number of children living at risk of the ill-effects of poverty.

Another measure that helps to gauge the current and likely future extent of poverty in a given area is the number of families

Figure 18

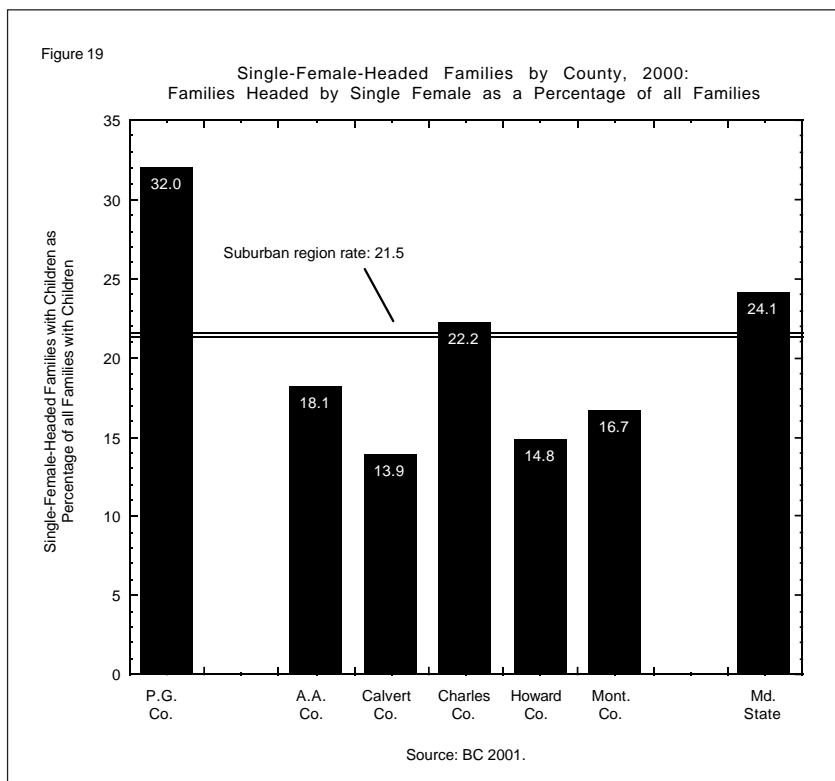
Free/Reduced Price School Meals, 2004:
Percentage of Children Receiving Service by CDP



Source: MSDE 2004b.

headed by single mothers. This is not in any way to disparage the efforts of these mothers, but merely to acknowledge that the circumstance of children being raised by single mothers is associated with a variety of undesirable outcomes that are risky for mother and child alike. For example, in the case of unmarried teen mothers, half are receiving welfare payments within one year of their child's birth. These children, in their turn, are more likely to have difficulty in school, and the girls are more likely to become teen mothers themselves while the boys are more likely to be incarcerated (NCPTP 1997).

Figure 19 compares the rates of single-female-headed families in the suburban jurisdictions. The reader should keep in mind that these are not necessarily all teen mothers, and that some of these women may indeed be grandmothers caring for their grandchildren with a relatively high level of experience and economic stability; it is nonetheless true that all of these single-female-headed families are lacking the assistance and second income of a partner, and so face obstacles that two-parent households may not. Prince George's has the highest rate of single-female-headed households in the suburban area, 32.0 percent. This is well above the suburban region's overall rate, 21.5 percent, and the statewide figure of 24.1 percent. None of the other regional jurisdictions' rates of single-mother families exceeds the state rate, and only one — Charles County, at 22.2 percent — exceeds the region's rate. The jurisdiction with the next highest rate is Anne Arundel (18.1 percent), followed in descending order by Montgomery (16.7 percent), Howard (14.8 percent) and Calvert (13.9 percent) (BC 2001).



Another important measure of the risk of poverty in a particular jurisdiction is the extent to which children are born to mothers with no high school diploma. This is because of the significantly higher rate of poverty among such children; by a factor of 10, children born to mothers without high school diplomas are more likely to be living in poverty within the first 8-9 years of life, with associated risks to school performance, health and safety (AEC 1999). Tables 13 and 14 show numbers and percentages of births to mothers with no high school diploma, 1995-2002.

As shown on table 13 and keeping in mind that Prince George's County has only the second-largest population among the suburban region jurisdictions, Prince George's County had the largest number (1,860) of births to mothers with no high school diploma out of all of the suburban jurisdictions in 2002 (the most recent data available). Montgomery County, which has the largest population in the suburban region, came in a distant second, with 1,270, followed in descending order by Anne Arundel (641), Charles (174), Howard (150) and Calvert (69) counties. Prince George's County did not see the largest increase in such

Table 13

Births to Undereducated Mothers by County and Year, 1995-2002:
Number of Children Born to Mothers with No High School Diploma
by Jurisdiction

Jurisdiction	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	+/- %
Prince George's Co.	1,369	1,207	855	1,402	1,577	1,638	1,782	1,860	35.9%
Anne Arundel Co.	540	513	539	567	529	572	635	641	18.7%
Calvert Co.	54	52	55	61	59	76	59	69	27.8%
Charles Co.	178	172	193	166	182	178	178	174	-2.2%
Howard Co.	124	135	126	137	112	128	143	150	21.0%
Montgomery Co.	872	935	1,021	1,019	1,105	1,136	1,136	1,270	45.6%
Suburban Region	3,137	3,014	2,789	3,352	3,564	3,728	3,933	4,164	32.7%
Maryland Statewide	7,971	8,910	8,520	9,176	9,448	9,777	9,547	9,864	23.7%

Sources: DHMH 1995, 1996, 1997, 1998, 1999, 2000, 2001, 2002b, table 18; Sommers 2004a, 2004b.

births 1995-2002, however; that distinction is Montgomery County's, whose 45.6 percent increase was significantly larger than Prince George's County's 35.9 percent increase. Nonetheless, Prince George's rate still far exceeded those of the other suburban region jurisdictions: Calvert (27.8 percent); Howard (21.0 percent); and Anne Arundel (18.7 per-

cent). Alone among these jurisdictions, Charles County saw a decrease of 2.2 percent in the number of children born to mothers with no high school diploma. The increase in the suburban region as a whole was 32.7 percent; statewide, it was 23.7 percent (DHMH 1995, 1996, 1997, 1998, 1999, 2000, 2001, 2002b; Sommers 2004a, 2004b).

Table 14

Births to Undereducated Mothers by County and Year, 1995-2002:
Children Born to Mothers with No High School Diploma as
Percentage of all Births by Jurisdiction

Jurisdiction	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	+/- %
Prince George's Co.	11.1	9.8	7.1	11.6	13.3	13.2	14.5	15.0	35.3%
Anne Arundel Co.	8.2	7.8	8.3	8.6	7.9	8.4	9.2	9.5	15.4%
Calvert Co.	6.0	5.7	6.0	6.5	6.2	7.4	6.2	6.8	13.6%
Charles Co.	11.2	10.4	11.8	9.8	10.9	10.2	10.2	9.9	-10.9%
Howard Co.	3.6	3.9	3.8	4.0	3.3	3.6	4.0	4.3	20.2%
Montgomery Co.	7.2	7.9	8.6	8.3	8.9	8.7	8.6	9.7	34.9%
Suburban Region	8.5	8.2	7.7	9.1	9.7	9.7	10.2	10.8	27.6%
Maryland Statewide	11.0	12.7	12.2	12.8	13.2	13.2	13.1	13.5	22.2%

Sources: DHMH 1995, 1996, 1997, 1998, 1999, 2000, 2001, 2002b, table 18; Sommers 2004a, 2004b.

Adjusting our view slightly, table 14 shows births to undereducated mothers as a proportion of all births in the suburban region jurisdictions, 1995-2002. Prince George's County leads here as well, with births to mothers without high school diplomas constituting 15.0 percent of all births in 2002 (the most recent data available). The closest follower is Charles County, with 9.9 percent, followed in descending order by Montgomery (9.7 percent), Anne Arundel (9.5 percent), Calvert (6.8 percent) and Howard (4.3 percent) counties; the regional and statewide rates were 10.8 and 13.5 percent respectively in 2002. Prince George's County also saw the largest proportional increase in the percentage of county births to mothers with no high school diploma, 35.3 percent, followed closely by Montgomery County at 34.9 percent. No other suburban region jurisdiction saw quite so large a proportional increase, with Howard County's 20.2 percent increase coming closest. The increase in Anne Arundel County was 15.4 percent, followed by Calvert (13.6 percent). Meanwhile, Charles County's proportion of births to undereducated mothers actually decreased 10.9 percent. During the same time period, the region saw a 27.6 percent proportional increase in births to undereducated mothers; statewide, the increase was 27.6 percent (DHMH 1995, 1996, 1997, 1998, 1999, 2000, 2001, 2002b, table 18; Sommers 2004a, 2004b).

3.C. Conclusion

Prince George's County is in many ways an entirely unique jurisdiction, both locally and nationwide. One of only two majority-African-American jurisdictions in Maryland, the county shares this distinction with Baltimore City. However, as anyone who knows both areas can attest, the comparison is strained in many ways: Prince George's County includes densely urban neighborhoods that rival some of Baltimore's for the challenges they pose, but at the same time the county is home to undeveloped wilderness, open farmland and delightful waterfront retreats.

Perhaps better than any other Maryland juris-

diction, Prince George's County knows change: how quickly it can occur and the challenges it can bring. Imagine trying to tell a county resident in the 1870s, 1950s or even the 1970s what the county would look like today. By the same token, it is difficult to predict exactly what shape the county will take in another 10, 20 or 100 years. Given the certainty of continued change, the only way to ensure that Prince George's County continues to thrive is to take every possible step to protect and strengthen the foundation on which the county's success will rest: our children and our families which, together, are our future.

Part II: Needs Assessment

Chapter 4. Statistical Analysis

In order to analyze the current state of children and families in Prince George's County, the LMB decided on three "results" and 13 "indicators" as being representative of some of the most important health and safety issues facing county children and families. LMB staff worked with the consultant to refine these indicators and to identify the best sources of statistical data. The plan was to compare the gathered data with the results of a telephone poll (described in chapter 6) administered randomly to county residents, affording county officials both the public's point of view on these issues and the more objective picture described by the data.

Two categories of data were collected for each indicator: intercounty and intracounty. This chapter presents this data in both graphic and tabular form. The intercounty analysis compares Prince George's County's performance on each indicator with that of five of its closest Maryland neighbors, the group of jurisdictions referred to throughout this report as the "suburban region": Anne Arundel, Calvert, Charles, Howard and Montgomery counties. Intercounty trend information compares the county's past performance with that of the region and the state of Maryland as a whole. The intracounty analysis compares the performance of the 11 selected census-designated places (CDPs) described in chapter 2, although only current (or most recent) "snapshot" data were available.

This chapter is organized into three sections, one for each of the LMB's results, with subsections for each indicator or component of an indicator. The rationale for choosing a particular indicator is given in the relevant subsection.

The purpose of this chapter is simply to attempt to quantify how statistically problematic for Prince George's County a given indica-

tor is. This is not to say that the analysis contained below is capable of determining the actual seriousness of a given indicator, but simply to describe its incidence. In other words, the LMB offers no conclusions in this report as to whether one issue is actually more important than another, just whether a given issue affects a higher proportion of people than do others.

An indicator was labeled "problematic" if it met one of three criteria: (a) Prince George's County ranks least favorably or second-least favorably compared with the rest of the suburban region for the latest year for which data are available; (b) Prince George's County's trend data are unfavorable; and (c) Prince George's County's trend data are favorable, but less favorable than the trend data for the suburban region as a whole (because this means that the gap between the county and its neighbors is growing larger, regardless of the county's own improvement). Where appropriate, limitations of and/or apparent inconsistencies in the data are discussed.

Finally, to the extent possible, the analyses below are based mainly on state sources. This procedure was followed in order to maximize the degree to which the data used had been collected using the same methodologies.

4.A. Result 1: Babies Born Healthy

There is no more important period in a child's life than his or her first years, when vital physical and mental development occurs and both positive and negative behaviors are formed that may affect the child's health for a lifetime. Imagine, then, the disadvantage faced by a child who is born unhealthy, compared to children born under more ideal circumstances. Nothing in this section should be read as a criticism of individual parents, whose options may be limited by poverty and other forces outside their immediate control.

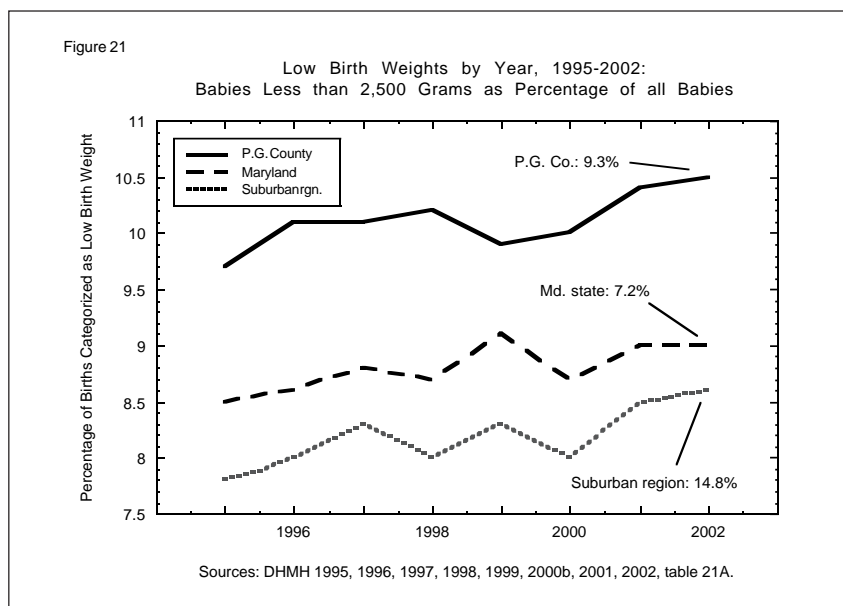
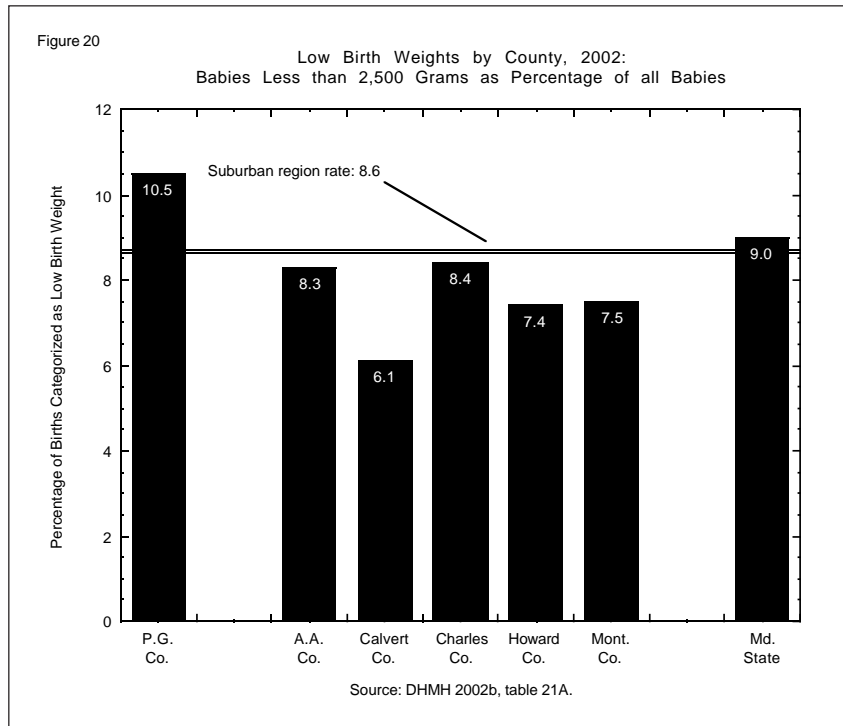
The purpose of this chapter is simply to attempt to quantify how statistically problematic for Prince George's County a given indicator is.

Instead, the goal is to measure need and see how best to improve the health of babies born in Prince George's County. This section considers several birth-related indicators, analyzed separately below: (a) low birth weights, (b) infant mortality and (c) early pre-natal care.

4.A.1. Low Birth Weights

As a general rule, babies who weigh less than 2,500 grams at birth (most typically premature deliveries) are considered to have a low birth weight. Low birth weight (LBW), in turn, is associated with a host of physical, social and academic problems later in life. It seems appropriate to state as a principle, in fact, that the fewer Prince George's County babies are born weighing less than 2,500 grams, the better the overall health of the county's young people is likely to be.

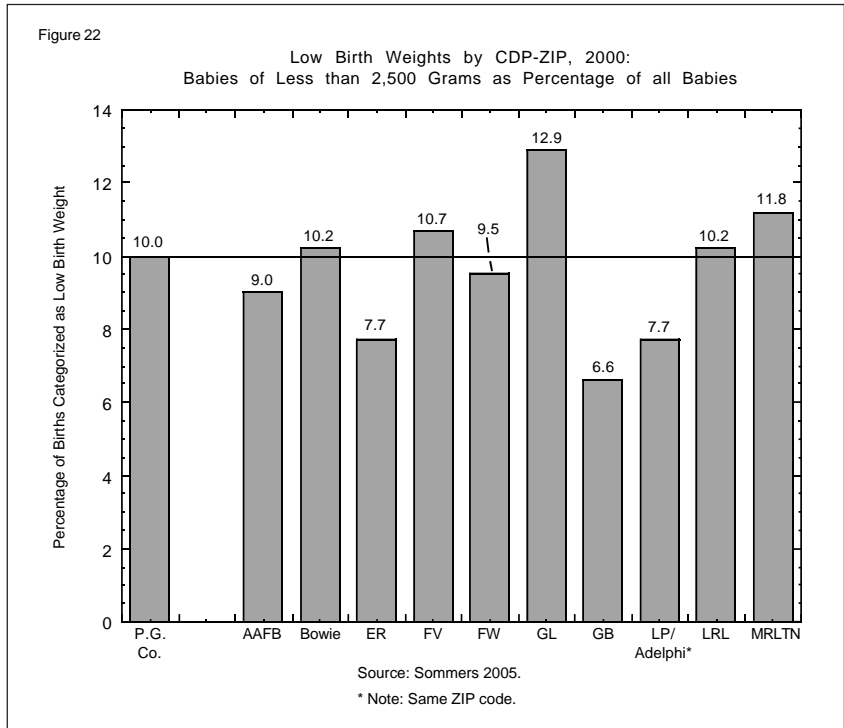
That said, our first snapshot view of the state of low birth weights in the suburban region gives cause for concern. Figure 20, which compares low-birth-weight rates among the suburban jurisdictions in 2002 (the most recent data available), shows that Prince George's County is the decisive leader in low-birth-weight babies: 10.5 percent of county newborns weigh less than 2,500 grams at birth. This is well above the statewide and regional rates (9.0 and 8.6 percent, respectively), and is most closely approached by the nearly identical low-birth-weight rates in Charles (8.4 percent) and Anne Arundel (8.3 percent) counties. These are fol-



lowed in turn by the nearly identical rates in Montgomery (7.5 percent) and Howard (7.4 percent). Calvert County had the lowest rate in the suburban region: 6.1 percent (DHMH 2002b).

A glance at figure 21 indicates that Prince George's County's high LBW rate in 2002 was not a new development. As the trend lines in the figure show, the rate of low birth weights in Prince George's County has fairly closely paralleled — while significantly exceeding —

Figure 22



the statewide rate and the suburban region rate since 1995. In all three cases, the overall change from 1995 was upward, i.e., an increase. The fastest increase in the rate of low birth weights was in the suburban region as a whole (14.8 percent) followed by Prince George’s County (9.3 percent) and Maryland (7.2 percent). Furthermore, since around 2001, Prince George’s County has been experiencing continually higher rates of low birth weights than it saw at any previous point 1995-2002, with relatively steady increases since around 2000 (DHMH 1995, 1996, 1997, 1998, 1999, 2000, 2001, 2002b).

Figure 22 offers the local-level perspective on low birth weights in Prince George’s County. While the figure uses the names of the CDPs selected for closer study in this report, information on this indicator was not available by CDP and so ZIP codes whose boundaries most closely approximated those of the CDPs were selected as rough approximations. This required that two of the CDPs, Langley Park and Adelphi, be collapsed into one, as they share the same ZIP code.

As figure 22 shows, the countywide LBW rate in 2000 (the most recent year with intra-county data available), 10.0 percent, sits some-

where near the middle of the rates of the selected CDP-ZIPs, with five above the county rate and five below. The CDP-ZIP with the highest rate of low birth weights was Greater Landover, where 12.9 percent of newborns born to residents weighed less than 2,500 grams at birth. Next highest was Marlton (11.2 percent), followed by Forestville (10.7 percent), Laurel and Bowie (both 10.2 percent), Fort Washington (9.5 percent), Andrews Air Force Base (9.0 percent), and East Riverdale and Langley Park/Adelphi (both 7.7 per-

cent). Greenbelt had the lowest rate of low-birth-weights among the selected CDP-ZIPs (Sommers 2005).

To summarize, then, Prince George’s County has the highest rate of low birth weights among the suburban region jurisdictions. When this fact is combined with the fact that the county rate has been trending upwards since 1999, it becomes clear that the issue of low birth weights should be considered problematic in Prince George’s County, and any available resources should be brought to bear against this health threat.

4.A.2. Infant Mortality

Infant mortality — i.e., the death of an infant within one year of birth — is an upsetting issue that some people may be surprised to learn remains a persistent problem in the United States, even in a state with world-class medical facilities such as Maryland and even in Prince George’s County. That it is a significant problem in the county is made clear by figure 23, which shows that Prince George’s County leads the suburban region jurisdiction with an infant mortality rate of 11.4 per 1,000 live births, well over the suburban regional and the state rates, which happen to be tied at

7.6 per 1,000 live births. The jurisdiction with the second-highest infant mortality rate is Howard County (6.8 per 1,000 live births), followed by Charles (6.3 per 1,000 live births), Anne Arundel (5.9 per 1,000 live births), Montgomery (5.5 per 1,000 live births) and Calvert (4.9 per 1,000 live births) counties (DHMH 2002b).

As with low birth weights, Prince George's County's high rate of infant mortality is not a recent anomaly. Figure 24 shows that the county's infant mortality rate has been consistently higher than either the state's or the region's rate since 1995. More positively, it is true that the county's rate of infant mortality was 10.2 percent lower in 2002 than in 1995. By comparison, Maryland's rate was 11.9 percent lower over the same time period, while the region's was 9.6 percent lower. Less positively, and as distinct from the state- and region-wide rates, Prince George's County's rate has been steadily increasing since just after 2000; the regional and state rates started upward at around the same time but both began to show decreases again starting in 2001 (DHMH 1995, 1996, 1997, 1998, 1999, 2000, 2001, 2002b).

At the local level, it appears that most of the selected CDP-ZIPs have lower rates of infant mortality than the county as a whole, as can be seen on figure 25. The countywide rate in 2000 (most recent population data available) was 9.8 per 1,000 live births, exceeded in only

three cases: Fort Washington, where 18.7 newborns out of every 1,000 died within one year of birth; Marlton, where the rate was 14.2 per 1,000 live births; and Greenbelt, with a rate of 11.0 per 1,000 live births. The selected CDP-ZIPs with rates below the county's were Greater Landover (8.9 per 1,000 live births), Langley Park/Adelphi (7.9 per 1,000 live births), East Riverdale (6.6 per 1,000 live births), Laurel (5.4 per 1,000 live births), Bowie (0.7 per 1,000 live births) and Andrews Air Force Base/Forestville, with 0.1 infant

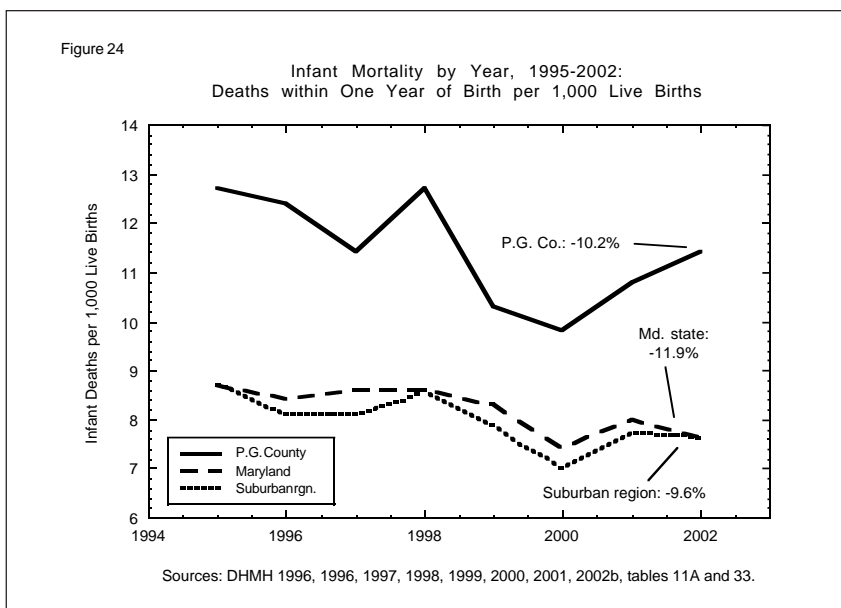
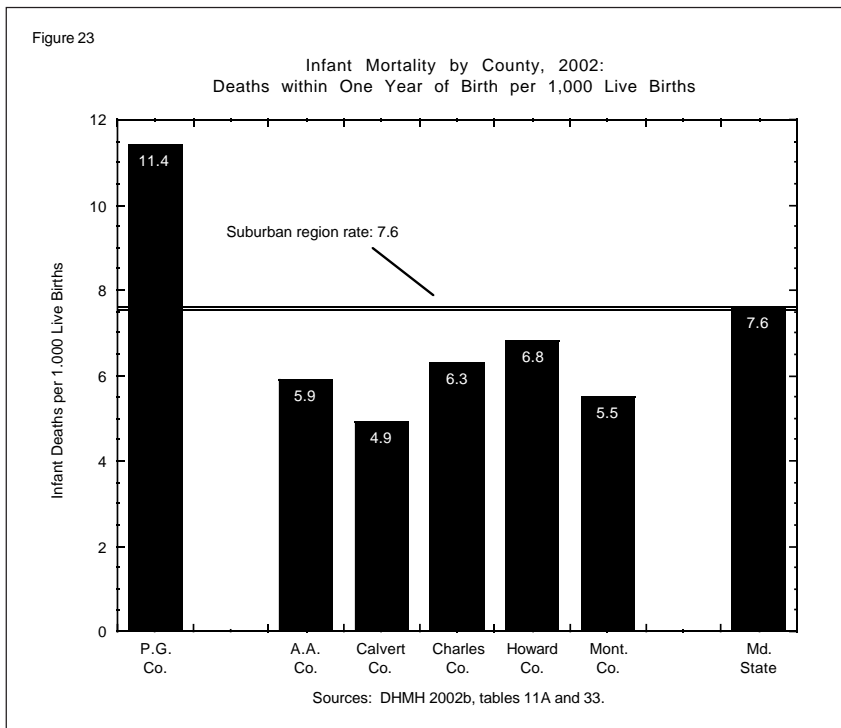


Figure 25

Infant Mortality by CDP-ZIP, 2000:
Deaths within One Year of Birth per 1,000 Live Births

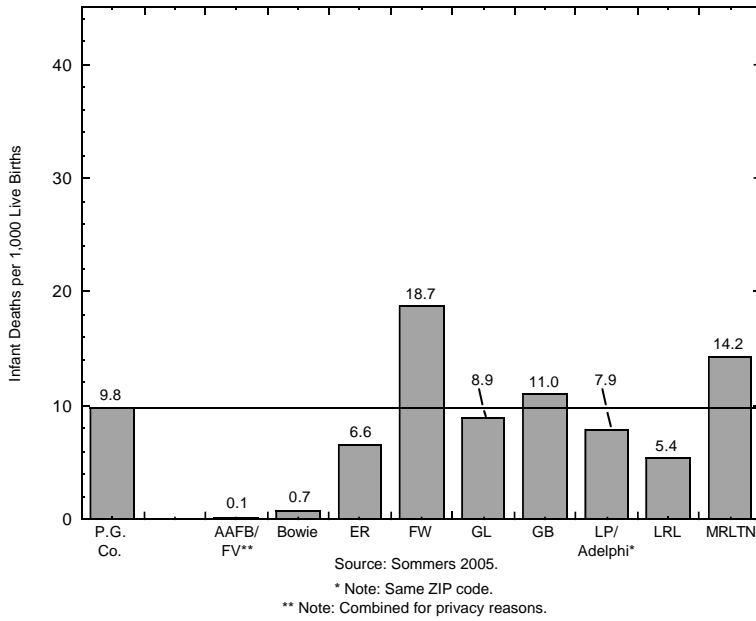
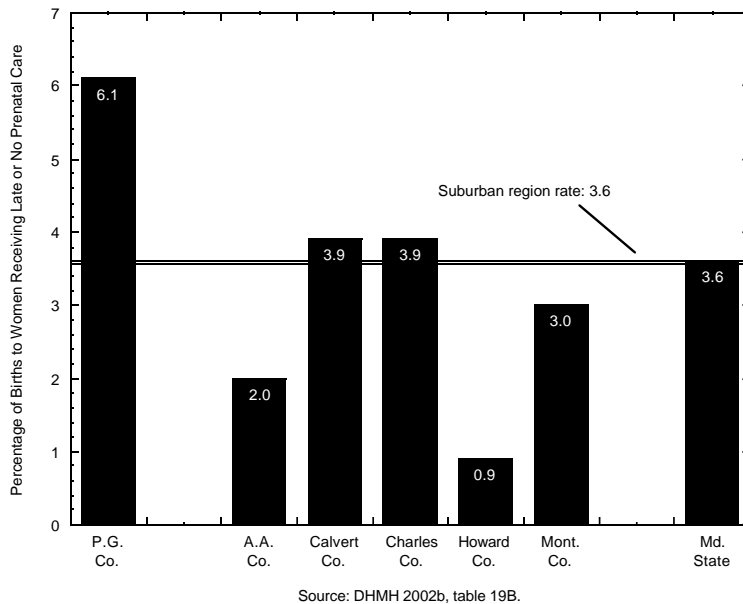


Figure 26

Prenatal Care by County, 2002:
Percentage of Births to Women Receiving Late or No Prenatal Care



deaths per 1,000 live births (Sommers 2005). (Note that, due to the low number of affected individuals in Andrews Air Force Base and Forestville, DHMH requires that the infant mortality data for the two CDP-ZIPs be combined, to protect family privacy).

Clearly, Prince George's County cannot afford to overlook its infant mortality rate. With not

only the highest rate in the suburban region but also with steady increases in that rate since 2000, it is clear that this indicator is a problematic one for the county.

4.A.3. Prenatal Care

The likelihood of negative birth-related outcomes — such as low birth weights and infant mortality, discussed above — decreases when a mother-to-be begins to receive regular medical care early in her pregnancy. Conversely, according to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, “Babies born to mothers who received no prenatal care are three times more likely to be born at low birth weight, and five times more likely to die, than those whose mothers received prenatal care” (HRSA 2004).

Figure 26 compares the suburban region jurisdictions in terms of percentages of births to mothers receiving late or no prenatal care. (For the purposes of this report, “late prenatal care” is any care starting after the start of the third trimester of pregnancy.)

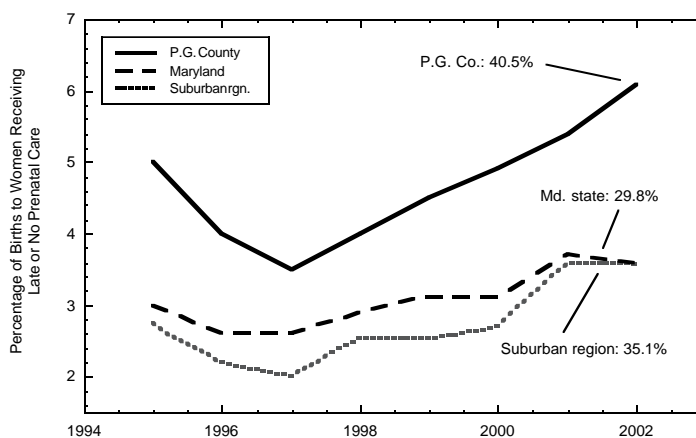
Prince George's County has the highest percentage of births to mothers receiving late or no prenatal care, 6.1 percent. This is substantially higher than either the state or regional rate (tied, at 3.6 percent). Calvert and Charles counties are tied for the second-highest rate of mothers receiving late or no prenatal care, 3.9 percent, followed by Montgomery (3.0 percent), Anne Arundel (2.0

percent) and Howard (0.9 percent) counties (DHMH 2002b).

The percentage of Prince George's County births that are to mothers who received late or no prenatal care has been steadily increasing since around 1997, as figure 27 shows. Since 1995, the county has seen a 40.5 percent increase in such births, a number which obscures the fact that the county's rate dropped sharply between 1995-1997, and so increased even more in the ensuing years than the 40.5 percent figure would suggest. Even at 40.5 percent, the Prince George's County increase still exceeds the state increase (29.8 percent) and the regional increase (35.1 percent). The figure shows that the Prince George's County rate of births to mothers who received little or no prenatal care has not closely paralleled the state or regional rates 1995-2002, and has substantially exceeded them throughout the indicated years (DHMH 1995, 1996, 1997, 1998, 1999, 2000, 2001, 2002b).

Figure 27

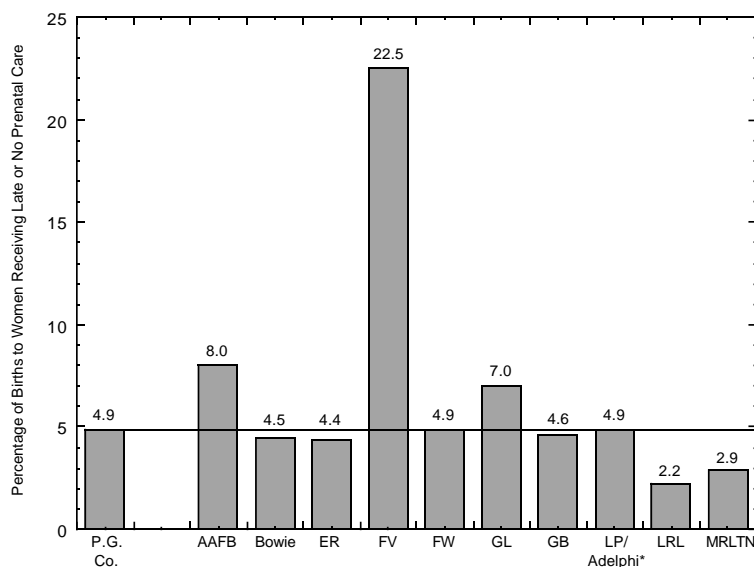
Prenatal Care by Year, 1995-2002:
Percentage of Births to Women Receiving Late or No Prenatal Care



Sources: DHMH, 1995, 1996, 1997, 1998, 1999, 2000, 2001, 2002b, tables 19 or 19B.

Figure 28

Prenatal Care by CDP-ZIP, 2000:
Percentage of Births to Women Receiving Late or No Prenatal Care



Source: Sommers 2005.

* Note: Same ZIP code.

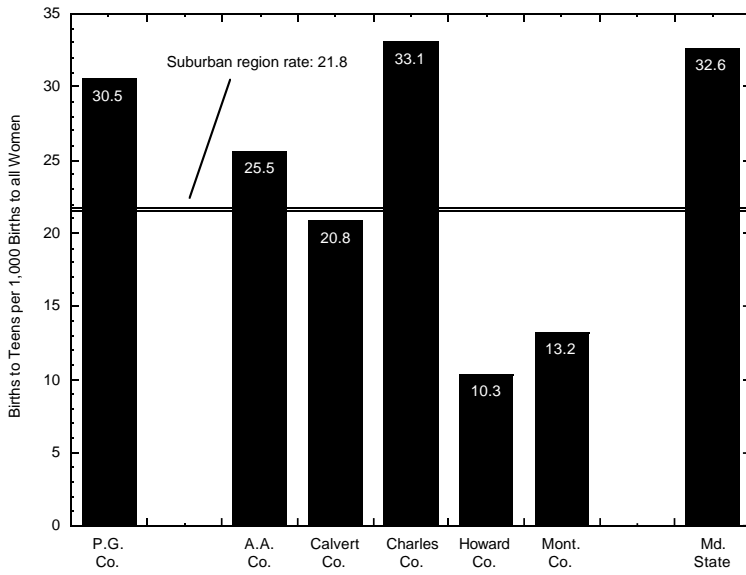
Many of the selected CDP-ZIPs had rates of late or no prenatal care that were similar to the countywide rate in 2000 (the most recent year for which local population data are available), when 4.9 percent of county births were to mothers who received late or no prenatal care. According to figure 28, three CDP-ZIPs had rates of such births that were substantially higher than the countywide rate: Forestville (22.5 percent), Andrews Air Force Base (8.0 percent) and Greater Landover (7.0 percent).

Two CDP-ZIPs, Fort Washington and Langley Park/Adelphi, had the same rate as the county did, 4.9 percent, followed by Greenbelt (4.6 percent), Bowie (4.5 percent), East Riverdale (4.4 percent), Marlton (2.9 percent) and Laurel (2.2 percent) (Sommers 2005).

It is striking that Marlton, with such a relatively high rate of earlier prenatal care, nonetheless had the second-worst standing among the CDP-ZIPs in rates of both low birth weights and infant mortality. Meanwhile,

Figure 29

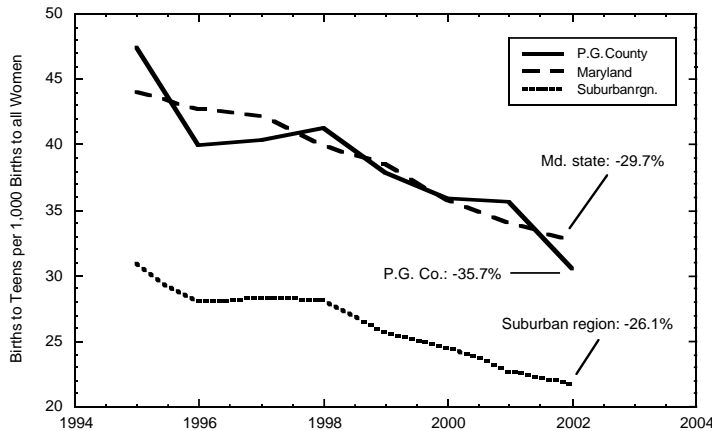
Teen Births by County, 2002:
Births to Mothers 17 and under as Proportion of all Births in Jurisdiction



Source: DHMH 2002b, table 11A.

Figure 30

Teen Births by Year, 1995-2002:
Births to Mothers 17 and Under as a Proportion of all Births



Sources: DHMH 1995, 1996, 1997, 1998, 1999, 2000, 2001, 2002b.

Forestville, which had the smallest proportion of mothers receiving early prenatal care among the selected CDP-ZIPs, had the lowest rate of infant mortality (even when Forestville data were combined with Andrews Air Force Base data, as DHMH required); Forestville did, however, have the third-highest rate of low birth weights. Similarly, while Andrews Air Force Base had the second-worst rate of prenatal care, it had the lowest infant mortality rate (even when its data were combined with Forestville's) and had the fourth-lowest

rate of low birth weights (Sommers 2005). Further study may be warranted to attempt to determine what additional factors contribute to these counter-intuitive results.

At any rate, the simple story is that there is a substantially higher percentage of births in Prince George's County to mothers who receive late or no prenatal care than in any other suburban region jurisdiction, a disparity that has existed since at least 1995 and which has been steadily worsening since 1997, marking this indicator as problematic, to say the least. Especially when one considers that improvements in prenatal care can decrease the chances of many other birth-related negative indicators (such as the low birth weights and infant mortality, discussed earlier), it seems clear that money and time expended increasing the number of county mothers who receive early prenatal care would be well spent.

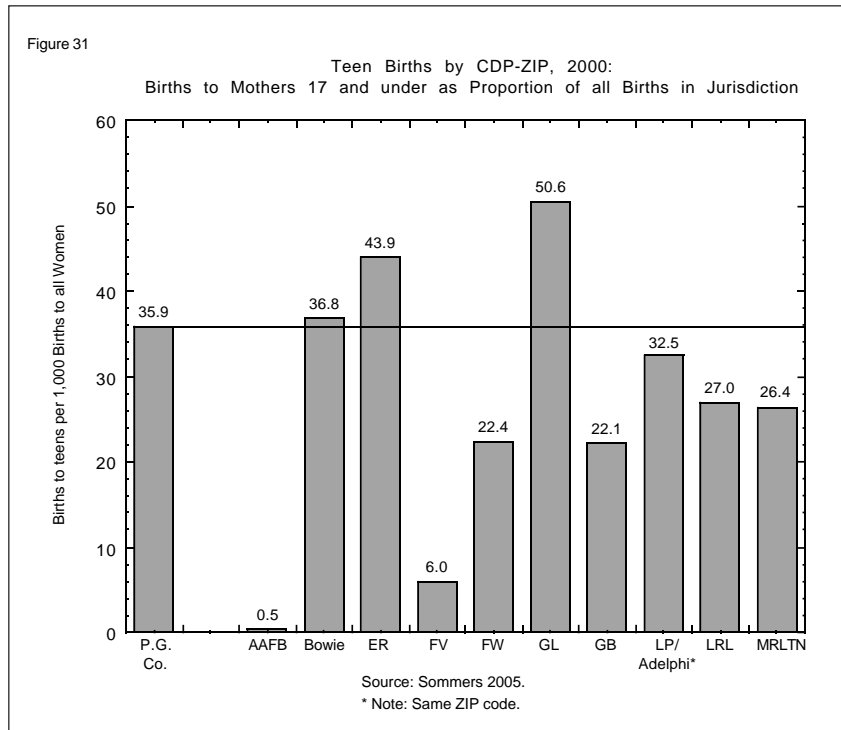
Another commonly accepted step toward improving infant health is to reduce the rate at which teenagers give birth. This is not because of failings on the part of teen mothers, but rather because — no matter how conscientious and devoted a teen mother may be — the circumstance of teen motherhood is at present associated with other factors (poverty, lack of education) that do not bode well for children of such mothers. Teen births are more likely to be premature and low weight. Children born to teen mothers are at greatly increased risk of acade-

mic failure. The mothers themselves are more likely to be obese or to suffer from high blood pressure than are women who did not give birth as teenagers (NCPTP 2002). Even worse, a recent study of over 700,000 young adults found that the offspring of teenage mothers attempt suicide at a rate more than twice that seen among the offspring of older mothers (Mittendorfer-Rutz et al. 2004).

Prince George's County has a high rate of teen motherhood but not, as it turns out, the highest in the suburban region. That distinction, as shown on figure 29, is held by Charles County, where 33.1 of every 1,000 births are to mothers 17 and younger. Prince George's County has the second-highest rate, 30.5 per 1,000, followed by Anne Arundel (25.5 per 1,000), Calvert (20.8 per 1,000), Montgomery (13.2 per 1,000) and Howard (10.3 per 1,000) counties. These are as compared to a regional rate of 21.8 per 1,000 (lower than the Prince George's County rate) and a state rate of 32.6 per 1,000 (higher than the Prince George's rate) (DHMH 2002b).

Between 1995 and 2002, Prince George's County's teen birth rate has declined steadily, as can be seen on figure 30. The county rate was very close to the state rate throughout this time period, sometimes exceeding it and sometimes dropping below it. The regional rate has consistently remained much lower than either the Prince George's County or the Maryland rate. Over the years 1995-2002, the county rate has declined 35.7 percent, while Maryland's rate declined 29.7 percent and the region's declined 26.1 percent (DHMH 1995, 1996, 1997, 1998, 1999, 2000, 2001, 2002b).

At the local level, and if the selected CDP-ZIPs are representative concerning this indicator,



there is considerable variation in the teen birth rate within the county. Three CDP-ZIPs had teen birth rates that exceeded the countywide rate of 35.9 per 1,000 in 2000 (see figure 31): Greater Landover (50.6 per 1,000), East Riverdale (43.9 percent), and Bowie (36.8 percent). Of those counties with rates lower than the countywide rate, Langley Park/Adelphi was highest, at 32.5 per 1,000, followed by Laurel (27.0 per 1,000), Marlton (26.4 per 1,000), Fort Washington (22.4 per 1,000), Greenbelt (22.1 per 1,000), Forestville (6.0 per 1,000) and Andrews Air Force Base (0.5 per 1,000) (Sommers 2005).

Interestingly, though high teen birth rates are generally associated with other negative birth-related indicators, it would not be possible to prove it with all of these CDP-ZIPs. For example, while the CDP-ZIP with the highest teen birth rate — Greater Landover — does have higher rates of low birth weights (highest), infant mortality (fourth highest) and late prenatal care (third highest), the two CDP-ZIPs with the second- and third-highest teen birth rates — East Riverdale and Bowie, respectively — are in the lower, more favorable half of the rankings on the three other birth-related indicators (except for Bowie's fourth-highest

standing in the low birth weights category). At the same time, Forestville, which has the second-lowest teen birth rate among the CDP-ZIPs, has the worst record on early prenatal care and the third-highest rate of low birth weights.

Of course, this only serves to point out that high rates of teen births and other negative birth-related indicators occur not because of each other but as a result of a complex web of inter-related causes that may be cultural, environmental, social and/or physical. Those neighborhoods that present anomalies may also offer useful information to help build better outcomes for all children in the county.

At any rate, due to the county's unfavorable standing among its neighbors, as well as unfavorable trend data, it is clear that the current level of teen births in Prince George's County may be considered statistically problematic.

4.B. Result 2: Children Successful in School

There is room for disagreement about precisely what it means to be successful in school, and how to measure success. The United States has only just commenced a long experiment — in the form of the set of federal laws known popularly as the No Child Left Behind Act — in mandated, universal standardized testing, which may turn out to be one way to quantify a student's relative success or failure in school. Other, more time-consuming possibilities might include measuring a student's performance during the years after graduation, which seems as useful a measure of academic success as any other and more telling than most. As to what contributes to the success or failure of a given student, there is — again — disagreement as to what allowances to make for each of the many factors that are known to affect academic achievement, in addition to what goes on in the classroom: socio-economic status, physical and mental health, a student's own level of motivation and so forth.

As many disagreements as may arise over how

best to measure the success of our students, surely there are certain basic principles with which no one would argue. In order for students to excel in school, for example, it is ideal that they obtain early experience with certain school-related tasks and concepts (how a book is handled, how to sit quietly in a group while being read to, how to politely get a teacher's attention in a group setting, and so on), preferably before arriving in kindergarten. Students also need to learn to read on grade level as soon as possible; they need to feel safe in school; and they need to attend school on a regular basis. To estimate the extent to which these basic needs are being met for Prince George's County public school students, the following four indicators were chosen: (a) kindergarten readiness, (b) third grade reading scores on the Maryland State Assessments (MSAs), (c) violence-related suspensions and (d) chronic school absence.

As an aside, the intracounty analysis in this section is based on school-level data from those schools identified by the LMB as being attended by students from the CDPs in question, although it should be noted that some imprecision may exist with this method in the event that the students from the given CDP are not the predominant majority in the school they attend.

4.B.1. Kindergarten Readiness

There is considerable interest in the education community on the topic of "kindergarten readiness," i.e., the idea that children who have developed certain academic skills and predispositions will be better able to adapt to the demands of the school environment than will children who have not. How to measure such development is another question entirely. The LMB decided on two different measures.

Here in Maryland, there is only one direct measure of kindergarten readiness, the state's

Due to the county's unfavorable standing among its neighbors, as well as unfavorable trend data, it is clear that the current level of teen births in Prince George's County is statistically problematic.

Table 15

WSS School Readiness by County and Year, SY 02-03 & SY 03-04:
Percentage and Number of Children, by Ethnicity,
Achieving a "Full Readiness" Composite Score

SY 02-03	All %	All #	AI/N %	AI/N #	A/PI %	A/PI #	A-A %	A-A #	Wte %	Wte #	Hisp %	Hisp #
Prince George's Co.	41	3,271	37	27	50	135	42	2,415	44	318	32	375
Anne Arundel Co.	46	2,016	44	14	50	66	32	264	51	1,608	35	64
Calvert Co.	63	570	*	*	56	5	47	64	66	492	47	9
Charles Co.	52	597	62	8	65	22	42	180	58	370	52	17
Howard Co.	60	1,463	29	5	65	176	45	162	64	1,082	45	38
Montgomery Co.	57	4,218	55	21	59	629	52	820	66	2,070	43	678
Suburban Region	50	12,142	43	75	58	1,033	43	3,905	59	5,940	39	1,181
Maryland Statewide	52	24,989	47	130	58	1,344	42	7,053	60	14,886	40	1,473
SY 03-04	All %	All #	AI/N %	AI/N #	A/PI %	A/PI #	A-A %	A-A #	Wte %	Wte #	Hisp %	Hisp #
Prince George's Co.	48	3,690	43	21	57	131	50	2,777	58	372	33	389
Anne Arundel Co.	55	2,369	50	18	65	91	41	354	60	1,823	40	83
Calvert Co.	60	572	*	*	92	11	49	73	62	480	44	8
Charles Co.	68	755	70	7	79	30	61	262	71	430	67	26
Howard Co.	63	1,517	14	1	66	175	48	194	69	1,106	37	41
Montgomery Co.	60	4,746	56	20	64	710	51	866	69	2,399	46	751
Suburban Region	56	13,655	49	67	64	1,148	50	4,526	65	6,610	41	1,298
Maryland Statewide	55	26,497	51	125	64	1,517	46	7,787	64	15,326	41	1,605

Key: % , percentage of children scoring at full readiness # , number of children scoring at full readiness
 AI/N, American Indian/Alaskan Native A/PI, Asian/Pacific Islander
 A-A, African-American Wte, White
 Hisp, Hispanic (may be of any race)

Note: An asterisk (*) denotes that data are not reported because the cell would contain information on fewer than five pupils, thereby potentially compromising the pupils' anonymity.

Source: MSDE 2003a, 2004a.

Work Sampling System (described below). Though it is only three years old, the decision to include it as an indicator under the kindergarten readiness result was an obvious one.

And while a child's readiness for school may develop adequately in a highly literate home, it is also true that the achievement levels of those students with some early experience of a school-like setting tend to exceed those of students without. For this reason, an analysis of county children's early school experience rounds out this section.

4.B.1.1. Work Sampling System

In recent years, more and more attention has been paid to the relationship between children's experiences before entering school and their later academic achievement (or lack thereof). Of course, these early experiences are difficult to quantify, since, by the very often informal and non-standardized nature of these experiences, there are no common measures, tests or other evaluations administered to all children until they enter kindergarten.

Fortunately for this report's purposes, all Maryland elementary schools have since the 2002-03 school year evaluated incoming kindergartners using an assessment protocol called the Work Sampling System (WSS), a portfolio-based measure of kindergartners' competencies in seven domains (categories of skills and attributes considered relevant to school success) with the express goal of measuring students' "readiness" for kindergarten. The domains in which kindergartners are evaluated are:

- Social and personal development.
- Language and literacy.
- Mathematical thinking.
- Scientific thinking.
- Social studies.
- The arts.
- Physical development and health.

Results are reported under each of these categories using a rubric that assigns scores to certain levels of observed readiness; students' various levels of readiness are in turn described as "developing readiness," "approaching readiness" and "full readiness." This report's analysis concerns itself only with an additional, "composite" category, in which children who have earned approximately 79 percent or more of the available points across all 7 domains are deemed to exhibit overall "full readiness" (MSDE 2004a).

The Early Learning Office of the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) advises that WSS results are best used to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of incoming kindergartners within a given county's school system, rather than as a basis for comparing one county's school system to another (Grafwallner 2004). Also, due to the small numbers of kindergartners in any one school system and, especially, in the various racial and ethnic breakdowns discussed below, some of what may appear to be important differences between various categories of data may in fact be statistically insignificant. However, the WSS offers a wealth of otherwise unobtainable information and may at least be use-

ful for starting certain conversations about student readiness and achievement in Prince George's County.

The basic intercounty picture of school readiness (as measured by the WSS) for school years (SYs) 2002-03 and 2003-04 is presented in table 15, which shows kindergartners' school readiness by county in the suburban region as well as for several racial and ethnic subcategories. As can be seen on the table, a smaller proportion of Prince George's County kindergartners score "full readiness" on the WSS than students in any other suburban region county. The percentage of Prince George's County students scoring "full readiness" in SY 2003-04 was 48, lowest in a field led by Charles County (68 percent) and followed in descending order by Howard (63 percent), Calvert (60 percent), Montgomery (60 percent), and Anne Arundel (55 percent) counties. However, Prince George's County's 48 percent score represented a 7 percent increase over the preceding year, the third largest increase seen in any of the suburban region counties. Charles County's 16 percent increase was largest, followed by Anne Arundel County's 9 percent jump. One county, Calvert, decreased 3 percent (MSDE 2003a, 2004a).

The relatively small proportion of Prince George's County kindergartners as a whole who achieved "full readiness" is mirrored in the breakdown of results by race and ethnicity, also on table 15. Prince George's County is last among the suburban region jurisdictions in all but two racial categories: American Indians, where it is next to last, and African-Americans, where it is third. Within Prince George's County, the largest proportion of students in any racial category who achieved "full readiness" was found among white students (58 percent, up from 44 percent the previous year), followed by Asians/Pacific Islanders (57 percent, up from 50 percent), African-Americans (50 percent, up from 42 percent), American Indians/Alaska Natives (43 percent, up from 37 percent) and Hispanics (33 percent, up from 32 percent) (MSDE 2003a, 2004a).

Table 16

WSS School Readiness by Area, SY 03-04: Percentage and Number of
Kindergartners, by Ethnicity, Achieving a "Full Readiness" Composite Score

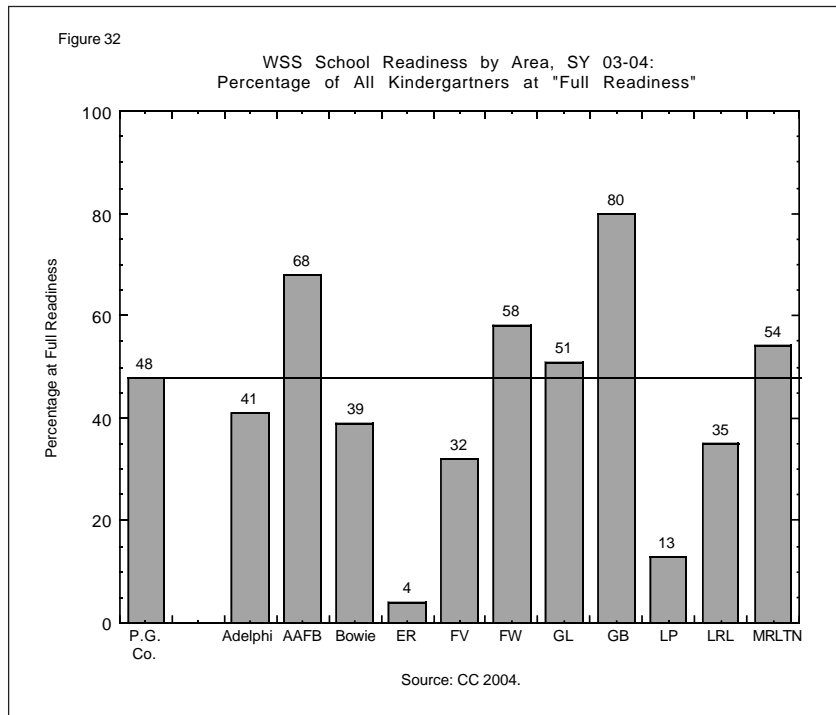
SY 03-04	AI/N	A/PI	A-A	Wte	Hisp	All
Adelphi						
Total at "full readiness"	0	4	21	3	53	81
Total, all (n)	1	6	41	6	142	196
Percent ready	0%	67%	51%	50%	37%	41%
Andrews Air Force Base						
Total at "full readiness"	1	2	29	6	1	39
Total, all (n)	1	2	40	13	1	57
Percent ready	100%	100%	73%	46%	100%	76%
Bowie						
Total at "full readiness"	0	5	94	62	6	167
Total, all (n)	4	24	235	138	22	423
Percent ready	0%	21%	40%	45%	27%	39%
East Riverdale						
Total at "full readiness"	0	0	2	0	2	4
Total, all (n)	0	4	22	6	64	96
Percent ready	n/a	0%	9%	0%	3%	4%
Forestville						
Total at "full readiness"	0	0	25	1	1	27
Total, all (n)	0	0	78	3	4	85
Percent ready	n/a	n/a	32%	33%	25%	32%
Fort Washington						
Total at "full readiness"	1	12	127	3	3	146
Total, all (n)	1	16	222	6	7	252
Percent ready	100%	75%	57%	50%	43%	58%
Greater Landover						
Total at "full readiness"	2	1	119	2	4	128
Total, all (n)	3	2	223	7	12	250
Percent ready	67%	50%	53%	29%	33%	51%
Greenbelt						
Total at "full readiness"	6	1	64	18	18	107
Total, all (n)	7	2	80	22	23	134
Percent ready	86%	50%	80%	82%	78%	80%
Langley Park						
Total at "full readiness"	0	1	2	0	6	9
Total, all (n)	0	2	8	1	60	71
Percent ready	n/a	50%	25%	0%	10%	13%
Laurel						
Total at "full readiness"	0	4	16	2	2	24
Total, all (n)	1	6	49	8	5	69
Percent ready	0%	67%	33%	25%	40%	35%
Marlton						
Total at "full readiness"	0	0	46	10	0	56
Total, all (n)	1	1	83	17	1	103
Percent ready	0%	0%	55%	59%	0%	54%

Key: AI/N: American Indian/Alaskan Native; A/PI: Asian/Pacific Islander; A-A: African American; Wte: White; Hisp: Hispanic (may be of any race)

Source: CC 2004.

Table 16 shows the performance of kindergarten students on the SY 03-04 WSS in the 11

CDPs chosen for study in this report. Greenbelt, where fully 80 percent of kinder-



East Riverdale (4 percent). These percentages are also graphically illustrated, in figure 32 (CC 2004).

One concern often broached in discussions of education policy is the “achievement gap,” or differences in levels of academic achievement between white students and students belonging to certain minority groups. The next two figures consider local level disparities in Prince George’s County between black and white kindergartners’ WSS scores.

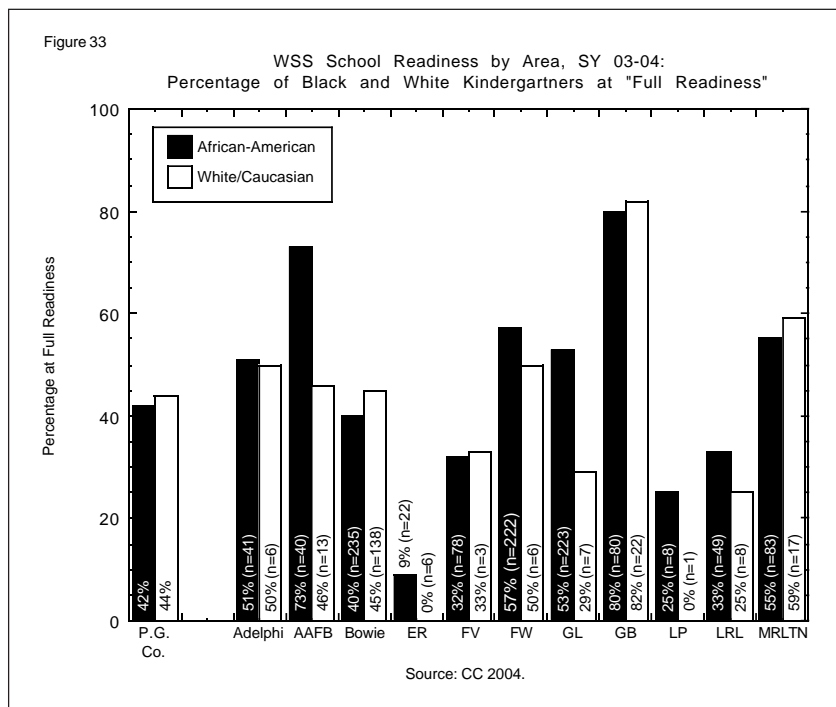


Figure 33 compares the percentage of white students achieving “full readiness” to the percentage of black students achieving “full readiness” in the selected CDPs, and a quick glance is sufficient to show that black kindergartners outdid white in the majority of these locales: Adelphi (black students achieving “full readiness”: 51 percent; white: 50 percent), Andrews Air Force Base (black: 73 percent; white: 46 percent), East Riverdale (black: 9 percent; white: 0 percent), Fort Washington (black: 57 percent; white: 50 percent), Greater Landover (black: 80 percent; white: 82 percent), Langley Park (black: 25 percent; white: 0 percent) and Laurel (black: 33 percent; white: 25 percent). The reverse case — in which white kindergartners achieved “full readiness” in greater proportions than did black kindergartners — was true in only 4 of the 11 CDPs: Bowie (black: 40 percent; white: 45 percent), Forestville (black: 32 percent; white: 33 percent);

gartners achieved “full readiness,” led the group’s widely differing scores. Rounding out the top three were Andrews Air Force Base (76 percent) and Fort Washington (58 percent); the majority of kindergartners in Marlton (54 percent) and Greater Landover (51 percent) also achieved “full readiness.” At the lower end of the scale were Adelphi (41 percent), Bowie (39 percent), Laurel (35 percent), Forestville (32 percent), Langley Park (13 percent) and

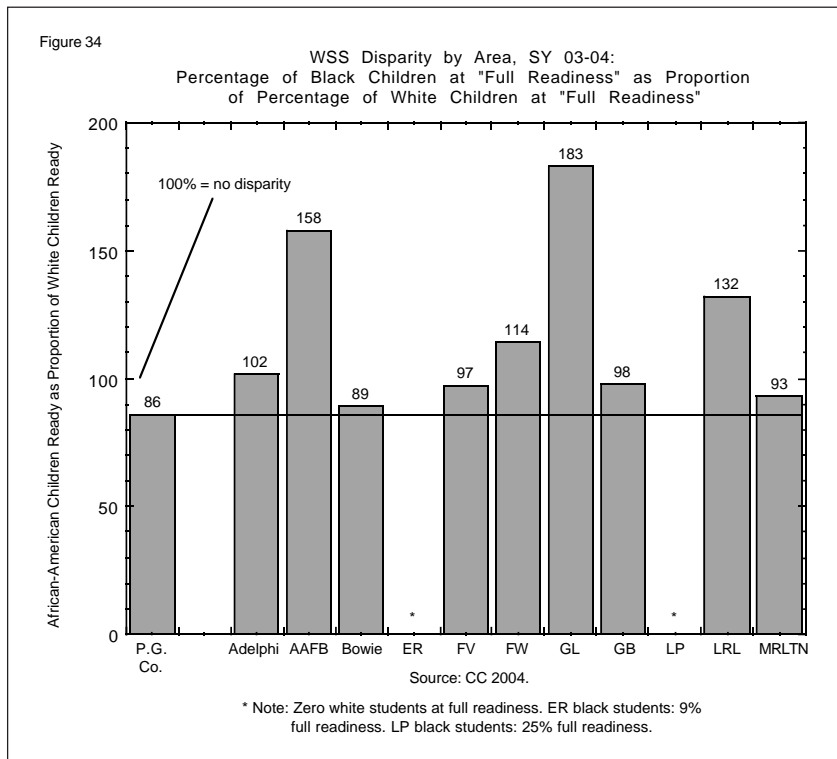
53 percent; white: 29 percent), Langley Park (black: 25 percent; white: 0 percent) and Laurel (black: 33 percent; white: 25 percent). The reverse case — in which white kindergartners achieved “full readiness” in greater proportions than did black kindergartners — was true in only 4 of the 11 CDPs: Bowie (black: 40 percent; white: 45 percent), Forestville (black: 32 percent; white: 33 per-

cent), Greenbelt (black: 80 percent; white: 82 percent) and Marlton (black: 55 percent; white: 59 percent) (CC 2004).

Of greatest interest are those CDPs with the smallest discrepancies, of course, since one main education policy goal must be to eliminate achievement gaps altogether. Figure 34 offers some insight in this regard, showing as it does the percentage of black kindergartners at “full readiness” as a proportion of the percentage of white kindergartners at “full readiness.” That is, a score of 100 percent on figure 34 would

indicate that the same percentage of black kindergartners and white kindergartners achieved “full readiness” on WSS; conversely, if 80 percent of a CDP’s black kindergartners achieved “full readiness,” as compared to only 40 percent of that CDP’s white kindergartners, the resulting score on figure 34 would be 200 percent, indicating that twice as large a proportion of black kindergartners as white kindergartners achieved “full readiness” on WSS.

Encouragingly, 6 of the 11 selected CDPs score within 15 points of 100, meaning that these CDPs see relatively little discrepancy between the percentages of white and black kindergartners achieving “full readiness” on WSS. The most extreme counterexample is in Greater Landover, where the percentage of black students achieving “full readiness” is more than 1.8 times larger than the percentage of white students; similarly, black kindergartners in Andrews Air Force Base are almost 1.6 times more likely to achieve “full readiness” on WSS than white kindergartners are. None of the selected CDPs shows a vastly larger percentage of white students than black students achieving “full readiness,” as the ear-



lier figure 33 also shows. For two of the CDPs, East Riverdale and Langley Park, this calculation could not be performed since none of the white students attending these schools achieved “full readiness” (CC 2004).

4.B.1.2. Early School Experience

A growing body of research suggests that children’s readiness to learn improves the more they experience school-like settings before entering kindergarten, whether these are formal preschools or simply organized group play (this report uses the term “early school experience” to refer to all such school-like settings a child may encounter, to include those schools officially identified as “preschools,” as well as nursery schools, day-care centers, family-care centers and so on). A 2004 study, for example, found that children with center-based early school experience were more likely to succeed academically than those without, a probability that was most pronounced among children from lower-income families (Bridges et al. 2004). This in turn suggests a possible avenue of attack against the “achievement gaps” that so often exist between white students and minority students, in addition to the benefits apparently enjoyed by all students who arrive

Figure 35

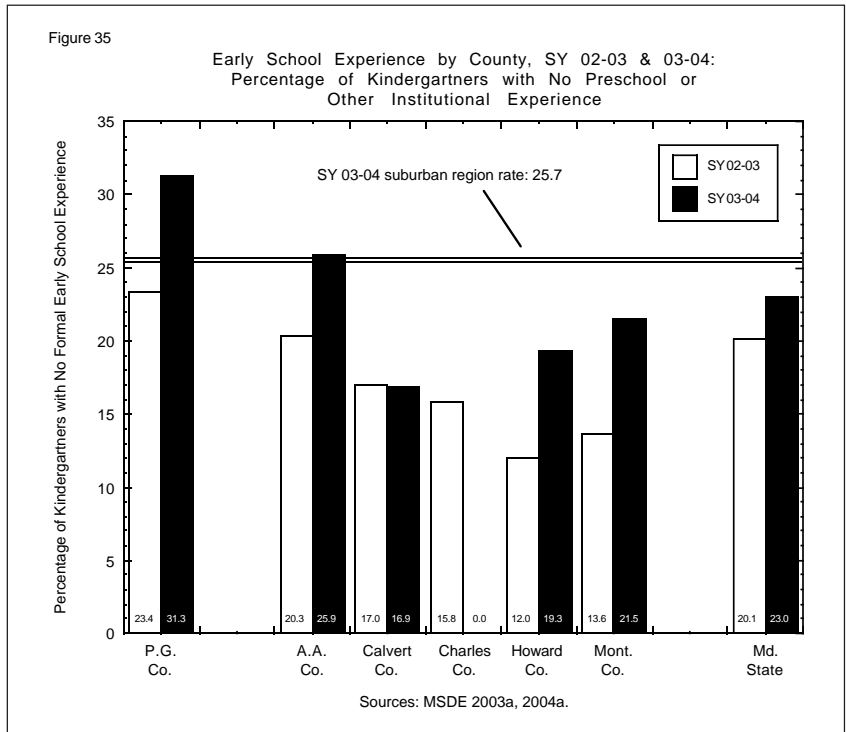
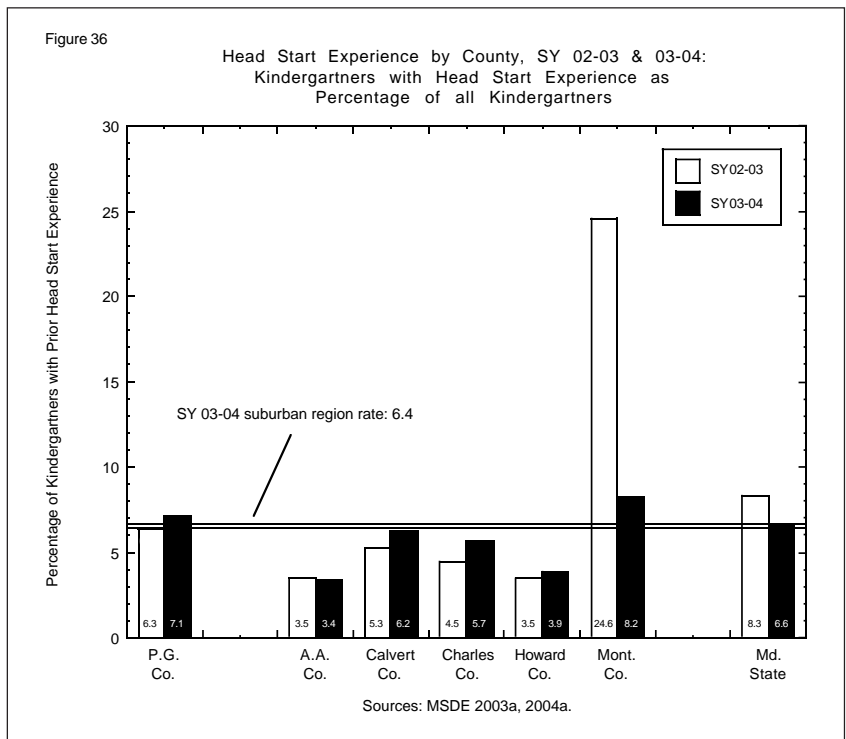


Figure 36



in kindergarten with some prior knowledge of school-like environments and activities.

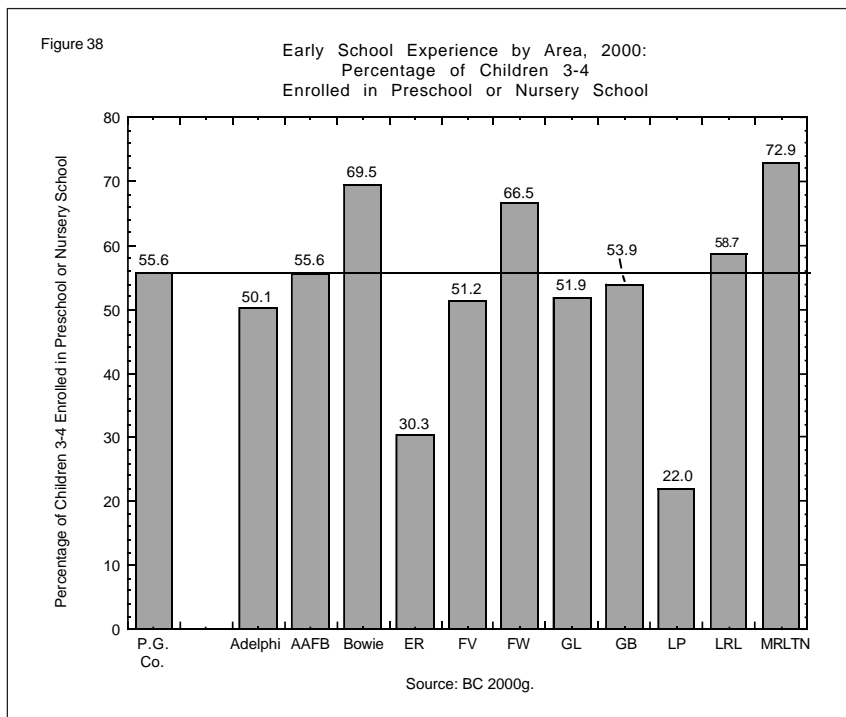
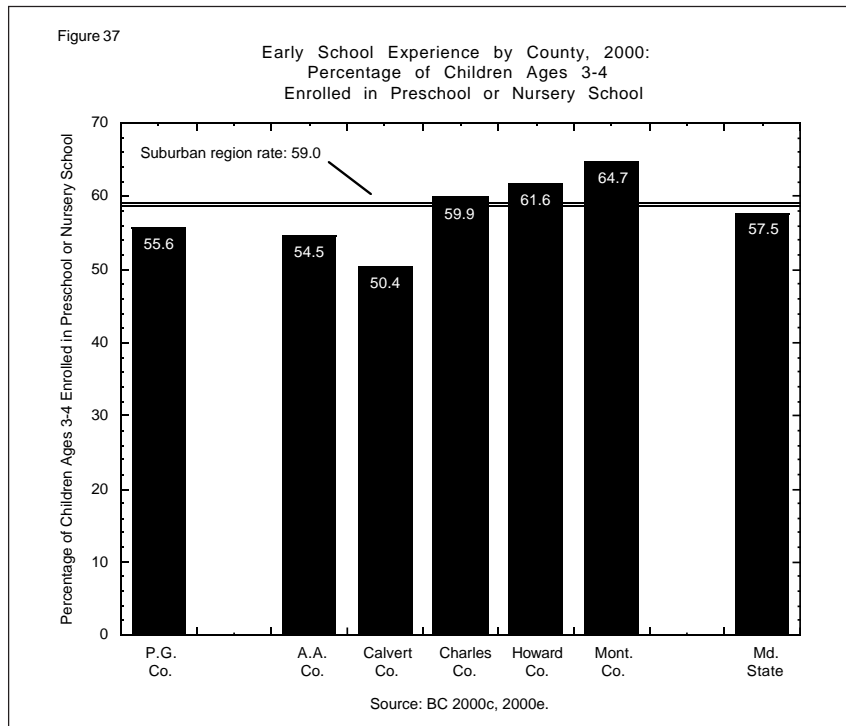
In fact, as figure 35 suggests, there is a smaller proportion of Prince George's County kindergartners with early school experience than in any of the neighboring jurisdictions, in a circumstance that worsened considerably

between SY 2002-03 and SY 2003-04. The percentage of Prince George's County kindergartners with no early school experience increased from 23.4 to 31.3 percent over the two years in question; in both years, this was the highest rate in the suburban region. All but two of the suburban region jurisdictions also saw proportional increases in students without early school experience during this time: Anne Arundel County, from 20.3 to 25.9 percent; Howard County, from 12.0 to 19.3 percent; and Montgomery County, from 13.6 to 21.5 percent. This was during a time when the statewide rate increased from 20.1 to 23.0 percent; the SY 2003-04 regional rate was 25.7 percent. In Calvert County the rate decreased slightly from 17.0 to 16.9 percent, while in Charles County it is reported as having decreased from 15.8 percent to 0 percent (or less than five students: for privacy reasons, MSDE does not report WSS statistics for categories in which there are less than five students) (MSDE 2003a, 2004a).

Of those Prince George's County kindergartners with early school experience, it appears that a large proportion obtain said experience through Head Start, a U.S. Department of Health and Human Services-funded preschool program open to children from low-income families (in 2005, a family of four making less than \$19,350 per year would qualify) or families receiving public assistance

(Temporary Assistance for Needy Families or Supplemental Security Income) regardless of income (DHHS 2005).

As can be seen on figure 36, Prince George's County had the second-highest percentage of kindergartners with Head Start experience in the suburban region in both SYs 2002-03 and 2003-04, 6.3 and 7.1 percent. Leading the pack was Montgomery County, whose 24.6 percent rate in SY 2002-03 frankly suggests reporting or data-entry errors (WSS prior care information is based entirely on self-reporting by parents and guardians on registration materials), but whose more credible 8.2 percent rate the following year still exceeded Prince George's County's 7.1 percent rate in the same year. All jurisdictions saw increases in the rate of kindergartners with Head Start experience over the years in question save Anne Arundel County, where the rate decreased slightly from 3.5 to 3.4 percent, and Montgomery County, where the seemingly anomalous data for SY 2002-03 prevent such a comparison. The jurisdiction with the third-highest 2003-04 rate was Calvert County (6.2 percent), followed by Charles (5.7 percent), Howard (3.9 percent) and Anne Arundel (3.4 percent) counties. The state rate decreased from 8.3 to 6.6 percent, while the regional rate for SY 2003-04 was 6.4 percent (MSDE 2003a, 2004a).



A slightly different view of early school experience is available from figure 37, which shows the percentage of children ages 3-4 enrolled in preschool or nursery school at the time of the 2000 census. It should be emphasized here that this is a different statistic — and one obtained differently — from the WSS data discussed earlier concerning early school experience. For one thing, figure 37 displays data

from several years earlier (the 2000 school enrollment data are the most recent released by the Census Bureau), at the same time that it only reflects enrollment in preschools or nursery schools specifically, rather than day-care centers, family-care centers and the like. So, while the Prince George's County rate of pre- or nursery school enrollment shown on figure 37 (55.6 percent) is higher than, say, Calvert County's (50.4 percent), it should be kept in mind that it would still theoretically be possible for Calvert County to have a higher percentage of kindergartners with "early school experience" as defined at the beginning of this section (i.e., to include not only preschools and nursery schools but also day-care centers of all kinds). The highest rate of pre- and nursery school enrollment of children ages 3-4 in the suburban region was in Montgomery County, at 64.7 percent, followed by Howard (61.6 percent), Charles (59.9 percent), Prince George's (55.6 percent), Anne Arundel (54.5 percent) and Calvert (50.4 percent) counties (BC 2000c, 2000d).

At the local level, the rate of preschool enrollment of 3-4-year-olds in one CDP (Andrews Air Force Base) matched the countywide rate of 55.6 percent, with most of the rest within about five percentage points of this (see figure 38). The CDP with the highest rate of 3-4-year-olds enrolled in pre- or nursery school was Marlton, with 72.9 percent. Marlton was followed, in descending order, by Bowie (69.5 percent), Fort Washington (66.5 percent), Laurel (58.7 percent), Andrews Air Force Base (55.6 percent), Greenbelt (53.9 percent), Greater Landover (51.9 percent), Forestville (51.2 percent), Adelphi (50.1 percent), East Riverdale (30.3 percent) and Langley Park (22.0 percent) (BC 2000g).

Having considered some measures of the extent to which Prince George's County children arrive in kindergarten with early school experience, we now consider the difference in achievement that exists between those kindergartners with early school experience and those without, at least as indicated by their subsequent WSS scores. Table 17 shows the

percentages of kindergartners in the 11 selected CDPs who achieved WSS scores of "full readiness," broken down into 7 categories of prior care type: Head Start, pre-kindergarten, center (day care, etc.), family (small day-care centers in a private home), nursery, home (i.e., no formal educational or school-like experience at all) and Even Start (a federally funded program aimed at children whose parents lack basic academic skills).

In general, table 17 seems to bear out what the research evidence alluded to at the beginning of this section suggests: that children who arrive in kindergarten with some school-like experience tend to perform better academically than those who do not. This was not true in all CDPs, or perhaps it would be more accurate to say that, in several CDPs, a significant proportion of children were able to obtain the needed experiences at home. This helps make a point that should not be overlooked in any discussion of home care versus organized formal early school experience: some homes, where an engaged adult is present and books and other educational items are readily available, may be quite well suited to adequately prepare a child for school. Other homes, where children are left to their own devices in front of the television or video games, will not offer much in the way of academic preparation or orientation to school-related tasks and practices.

In 2 of the 11 selected CDPs (see table 17), the percentage of home-cared kindergartners achieving WSS "full readiness" was higher than "full readiness" kindergartners in most of the other prior care categories. Laurel's home-cared kindergartners, in fact, outperformed all other Laurel kindergartners, with 57 percent assessed at "full readiness," a larger proportion than that seen in any other Laurel prior care category as well as among Laurel kindergartners as a whole (i.e., 35 percent). The next

Children who arrive in kindergarten with some school-like experience tend to perform better academically than those who do not.

Table 17

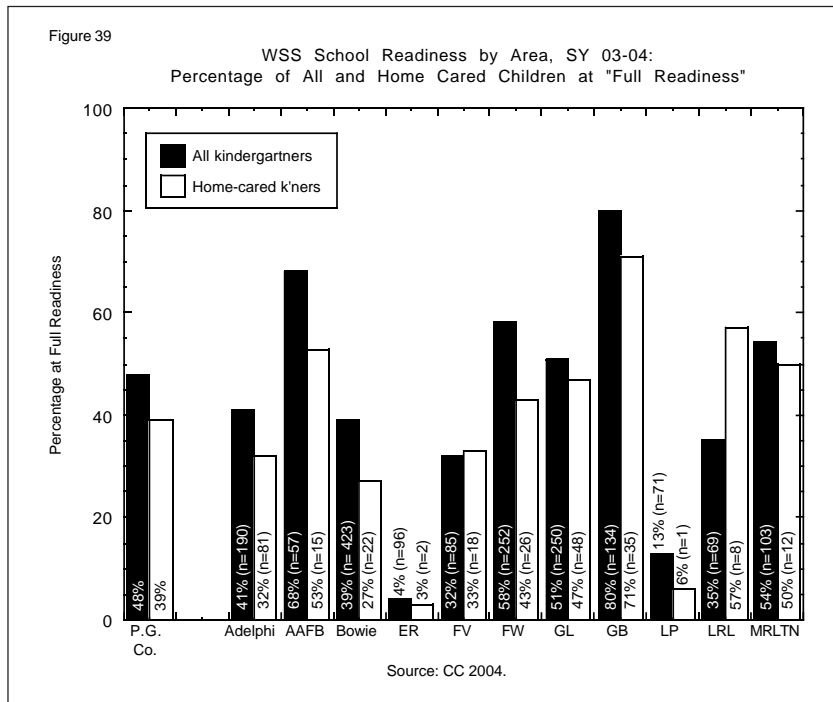
WSS School Readiness by Area, SY 03-04: Percentage and Number of Kindergartners, by Prior Care Type, Achieving a “Full Readiness” Composite Score

SY 03-04	Hd Strt	Pre-K	Center	Family	Nursery	Home	Evn Strt	All
Adelphi								
Total at “full readiness”	6	31	4	3	3	26	4	77
Total, all (n)	7	71	8	7	6	81	10	190
Percent ready	86%	44%	50%	43%	50%	32%	40%	41%
Andrews Air Force Base								
Total at “full readiness”	2	13	10	5	0	8	1	39
Total, all (n)	3	16	17	5	0	15	1	57
Percent ready	66%	81%	59%	100%	n/a	53%	100%	68%
Bowie								
Total at “full readiness”	0	25	48	14	48	22	9	167
Total, all (n)	7	80	108	26	94	82	24	423
Percent ready	0%	32%	44%	54%	51%	27%	38%	39%
East Riverdale								
Total at “full readiness”	0	0	0	0	1	2	1	4
Total, all (n)	5	13	1	2	6	64	5	96
Percent ready	0%	0%	0%	0%	17%	3%	20%	4%
Forestville								
Total at “full readiness”	5	7	5	1	3	6	0	27
Total, all (n)	16	16	18	5	7	18	5	85
Percent ready	31%	44%	28%	20%	43%	33%	0%	32%
Fort Washington								
Total at “full readiness”	6	28	49	10	17	26	8	146
Total, all (n)	11	46	71	21	24	61	14	252
Percent ready	55%	61%	69%	48%	71%	43%	57%	58%
Greater Landover								
Total at “full readiness”	25	24	17	2	8	48	3	128
Total, all (n)	36	48	35	6	13	103	6	250
Percent ready	69%	50%	49%	33%	62%	47%	50%	51%
Greenbelt								
Total at “full readiness”	17	15	8	5	12	35	9	107
Total, all (n)	20	22	8	7	12	49	9	134
Percent ready	85%	68%	100%	71%	100%	71%	100%	80%
Langley Park								
Total at “full readiness”	0	6	0	0	0	1	2	9
Total, all (n)	0	38	1	0	0	18	11	71
Percent ready	n/a	16%	0%	n/a	n/a	6%	18%	13%
Laurel								
Total at “full readiness”	2	5	2	5	1	8	1	24
Total, all (n)	8	10	12	12	8	14	4	69
Percent ready	25%	50%	17%	42%	13%	57%	25%	35%
Marlton								
Total at “full readiness”	6	7	15	7	5	12	4	56
Total, all (n)	10	26	19	9	8	24	6	103
Percent ready	60%	27%	79%	78%	63%	50%	66%	54%

Source: CC 2004

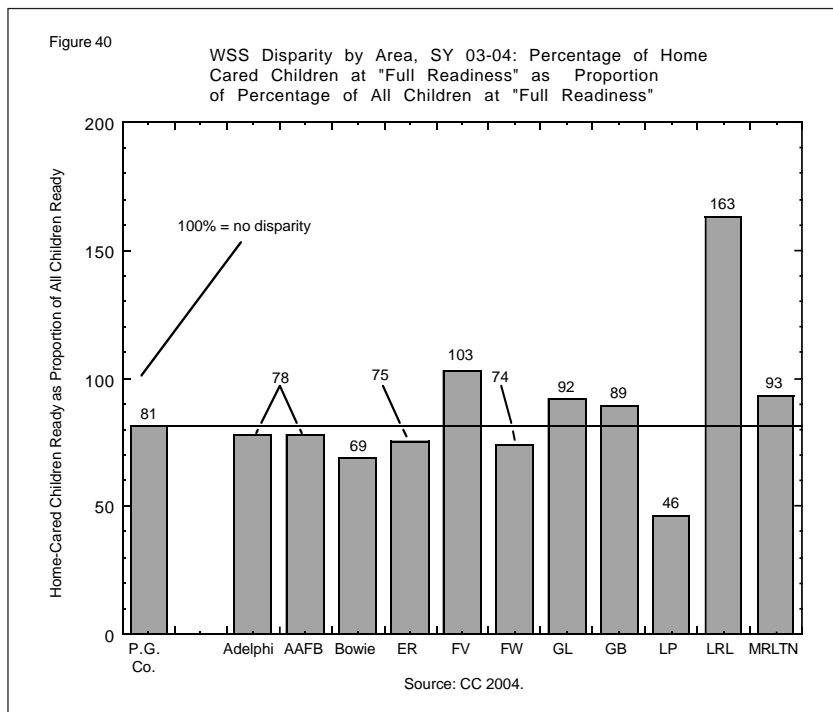
highest category in Laurel was pre-kindergarten (50 percent), followed — interestingly — by those students who had received care in a family child-care center (42 percent).

Another CDP whose kindergartners performed differently than the school readiness research might have predicted was Forestville, where 33 percent of home-cared



WSS was 35 percent, while in Forestville it was 32 percent, placing these two CDPs eighth and ninth among the 11 selected CDPs, respectively (CC 2004).

Aside from the counterexamples offered by Forestville and Laurel, and as noted above, the other CDPs' kindergartners seemed to perform about as the school readiness research would suggest: the percentage of kindergartners with no formal early school experience who achieved "full readiness" was the lowest of all the prior-care categories in three CDPs (Adelphi: 32 percent; Andrews Air Force Base: 53 percent; and Fort Washington: 43 percent) and the next-to-lowest in six more (Bowie: 27 percent; East Riverdale: 3 percent; Greater Landover: 47 percent; Greenbelt: 71 percent; Langley Park: 6 percent; and Marlton: 50 percent) (CC 2004).



kindergartners achieved "full readiness" on WSS, the third-highest rate among all of Forestville's prior care categories (CC 2004).

As intriguing as these particular results are, however, it should be pointed out that Laurel and Forestville did not do well in WSS scores overall, at least not compared to the other nine selected CDPs: the total percentage of Laurel kindergartners achieving "full readiness" on

turn to figure 39, which uses a bar graph format to compare the overall percentage of each CDP's kindergartners who achieved "full readiness" to the percentage of home-cared kindergartners who achieved "full readiness." As the figure shows (and as mentioned above), Laurel was the only CDP where a higher proportion of home-cared kindergartners were assessed at "full readiness" than the proportion of all kindergartners assessed at "full

readiness,” meaning that — in Laurel, and as measured by WSS scores — home care appears to provide better academic preparation than any other prior care category (CC 2004). But figure 39 also makes clear another aspect of home care versus other prior care categories: the home-cared kindergartners in some CDPs vastly outperformed both home-cared kindergartners and kindergartners as a whole in other CDPs, suggesting, again, that there are certain neighborhoods where home care tends to prepare children for school quite sufficiently, while there are other neighborhoods where this is manifestly not the case.

Yet another view of this topic is available in figure 40, which shows the percentage of each CDP’s home-cared kindergartners achieving “full readiness” as a proportion of the percentage of all of each CDP’s kindergartners achieving “full readiness.” That is, a score of 100 percent on figure 40 would indicate that, in the given CDP, the same percentage of home-cared kindergartners and all kindergartners achieved “full readiness” on WSS; con-

versely, if 80 percent of a CDP’s home-cared kindergartners achieved “full readiness,” as compared to only 40 percent of that CDP’s kindergartners as a whole, the resulting score on figure 40 would be 200 percent, indicating that the proportion of home-cared kindergartners achieving “full readiness” on WSS was twice as large as the proportion among that CDP’s kindergartners as a whole. As can be seen, most of the bars fall below 100, meaning that, for the most part, home-cared children do not arrive at kindergarten as well prepared as other children.

Returning, finally, to intercounty comparisons of the various school readiness data presented in this section, it is this report’s finding that the county’s school readiness indicators show some problems when compared with the neighboring jurisdictions in the suburban region. Among the suburban region jurisdic-

tions, Prince George’s County has the lowest percentage of kindergartners scoring “full readiness” on the WSS (though it has the third highest “full readiness” rate for both Native American and African-American kindergartners) and the smallest percentage of kindergartners with some form of early school experience. Clearly, lack of early school experience among children from certain parts of the county does not necessarily have a negative effect on their academic achievement; still, it is clear that a large number of county children could benefit from some form of early school experience, and further investigation is recommended to determine (a) where this is most needed and (b) how it could be accomplished most effectively.

4.B.2. Third Grade Reading Scores

As the skill on which all other academic disciplines depend, literacy may be thought of as something of a gatekeeper where academic achievement — and, indeed, success in all of life’s endeavors — is concerned. Simply put, those who read skillfully and critically are at a huge advantage over those who do not, even in subject areas such as math, science and information technology. Literacy and academic success go hand in hand.

Since SY 2002-03, Maryland public school students in a gradually increasing number of grades have been assessed in literacy and other subject areas under the standardized testing regimen known as the Maryland School Assessments (MSA). The LMB decided to consider third graders’ MSA reading scores as another indicator of how well young Prince George’s County residents are prepared to succeed throughout their academic careers. The MSA assesses children as being either “basic,” “proficient” or “advanced,” and the LMB chose as its indicator the rate at which Prince George’s County third graders achieve a “proficient” MSA score in reading.

Figure 41 shows the percentage of kindergartners in each of the suburban jurisdictions who were assessed as “proficient” in reading in SYs

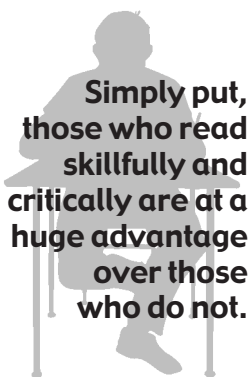
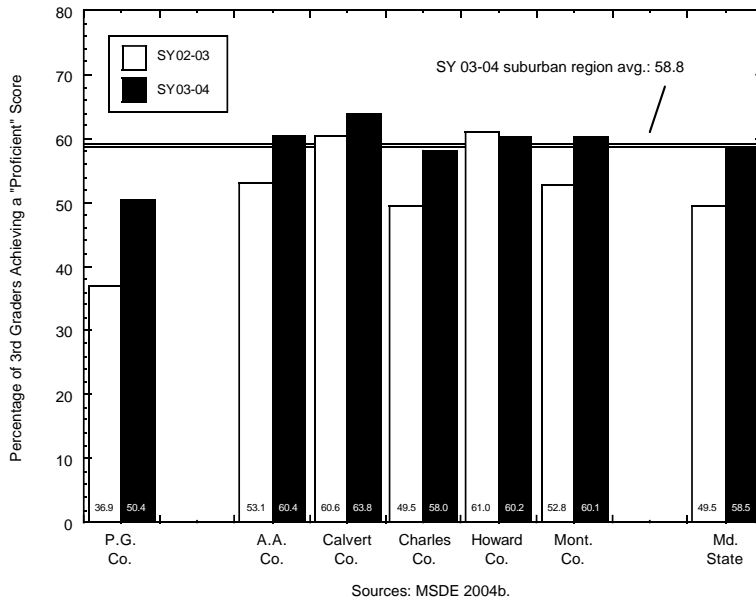


Figure 41

MSA Achievement by County and School Year, SY 02-03 & 03-04:
Percentage of 3rd Graders Achieving a "Proficient" Score in Reading

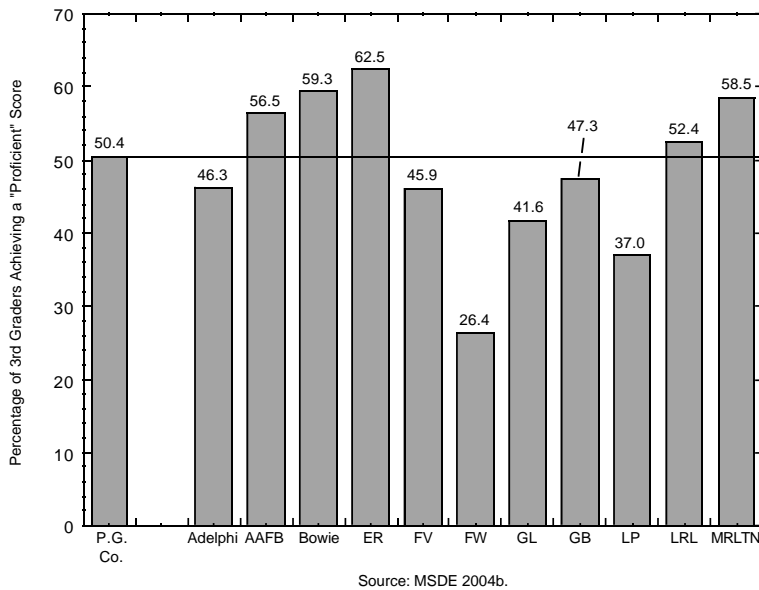


cent) and Charles (58.0 percent) counties. The regional rate in SY 2003-04 was 57.2 percent, while the statewide rate was 58.5 percent (MSDE 2004b).

On the local level, the countywide rate of third graders achieving "proficient" on the MSA reading assessment, 50.4 percent, masks a good deal of variation among the 11 selected CDPs (figure 42). There, rates ranged as high as 62.5 percent in East Riverdale — a striking result in an area with a relatively high rate of both poverty and births to teen mothers, the next-to-lowest rate of early school experience among kindergartners and the lowest rate of kindergartners achieving "full readiness" on WSS among the 11 selected CDPs (BC 2000g, 2002; CC 2004; MSDE 2004b; Sommers 2005).

Figure 42

MSA Achievement by CDP, SY 03-04:
Percentage of 3rd Graders Achieving a "Proficient" Score in Reading



2002-03 and 2003-04. While Prince George's County saw the largest increase in proficient third-grade readers from one year to the next (from 36.9 to 50.4 percent), the county nonetheless had the lowest rate of proficient third-grade readers out of all of the suburban region jurisdictions in both years. Calvert County led in SY 2003-04 with 63.8 percent, followed by Anne Arundel (60.4 percent), Howard (60.2 percent), Montgomery (60.1 per-

Greater Landover (41.6 percent), Langley Park (37.0 percent) and Fort Washington (26.4 percent). East Riverdale's apparently anomalous rate aside, the numbers two and three CDPs on this list, Bowie and Marlton, respectively, should come as no surprise: Bowie had the highest and Marlton the second-highest rate of early school experience among their respective kindergartners. However, Fort

Table 18

MSPAP Achievement by County and Year, 1993-2002:
Percentage of Children Achieving a “Satisfactory” Score in Reading Test,
3rd Grade

Jurisdiction	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	+/- %
Prince George's Co.	21.3	24.3	25.8	24.3	29.0	29.5	25.9	21.4	15.7	-26.3%
Anne Arundel Co.	37.8	40.4	44.3	43.9	46.7	47.8	42.9	41.3	36.2	-4.2%
Calvert Co.	32.8	43.8	40.0	49.6	45.3	45.5	45.7	47.1	42.7	30.2%
Charles Co.	27.3	28.6	31.2	32.8	36.9	40.2	41.4	36.1	37.4	37.0%
Howard Co.	45.0	51.1	53.3	57.7	59.3	60.1	58.3	60.1	53.0	17.8%
Montgomery Co.	42.4	43.8	44.5	46.0	51.5	48.9	44.2	37.6	31.4	-25.9%
Suburban Region	34.4	38.7	39.9	42.4	44.8	45.3	43.1	40.6	36.1	4.9%
Maryland Statewide	30.6	34.0	35.3	36.8	41.6	41.2	39.2	36.5	30.7	0.3%

Note: Suburban region figures are averages and are not directly comparable to jurisdiction and state percentage figure.

Source: MSDE 2002b.

Washington, with the third-highest rate of early school experience among its kindergartners (BC 2002), nonetheless had the lowest rate of “proficient” third graders on the 2003-04 MSA reading assessment (MSDE 2004b). Of course, these contradictions and surprises are not offered as rejoinders to those researchers who have found correlations between early school experience and subsequent academic achievement, but rather to remind the reader that a one-size-fits-all approach is not likely to work across a county as diverse as Prince George’s County.

Finally, for a sense of historical context, table 18 presents a county-level look at the achievement of suburban region jurisdiction third graders in reading on the Maryland School Performance Assessment Program, the standardized testing program that the MSA replaced in 2003. Though these figures cannot be directly compared to the MSA scores, they do offer a longer-term look at the reading performance of area third graders (the MSPAP was administered 1993-2002).

As the table makes clear, Prince George’s County’s relatively low third-grade MSA read-

ing scores (discussed above) are no anomaly: not only did the county have the lowest rate of third graders scoring “satisfactory” on the MSPAP reading portion in each year that the MSPAP was administered, but the county’s rate tumbled 26.3 percent (from 21.3 to 15.7 percent) during the same time. This was the largest decrease seen in any of the suburban jurisdictions, although — since MSDE announced its intentions to terminate the MSPAP prior to the final administration of the test — there is a strong possibility that students did not regard the 2002 MSPAP as seriously as in past years. Nonetheless, disregarding the 2002 results does nothing to change the fact that the county consistently had the smallest proportion of third graders scoring “satisfactory” in reading on MSPAP each year (MSDE 2002b).

Prince George’s County’s consistently low third-grade scores on reading assessments (both MSA and MSPAP), going back more than 10 years, is certainly cause for concern, raising the question as to whether more could be done for those Prince George’s County students who continue to fall between the cracks.

Table 19

Suspensions by County, SY 93-94 through SY 02-03:
Percentage of Students Suspended for all Reasons During the Year

Jurisdiction	93-94	94-95	95-96	96-97	97-98	98-99	99-00	00-01	01-02	02-03	+/- %
Prince George's Co.	8.2	8.8	8.5	9.0	9.7	9.1	8.0	7.7	8.5	9.1	11.0%
Anne Arundel Co.	8.8	9.1	9.3	9.1	9.2	8.2	8.7	9.4	9.9	10.0	13.6%
Calvert Co.	6.2	6.5	6.5	7.6	7.4	6.9	6.1	6.3	7.2	6.8	9.7%
Charles Co.	10.6	16.6	17.7	18.0	12.9	11.6	9.6	11.2	12.7	12.1	14.2%
Howard Co.	3.3	4.0	2.9	2.7	4.9	4.5	4.6	4.5	4.2	4.2	27.3%
Montgomery Co.	2.7	3.0	3.3	3.6	3.8	3.5	3.4	3.7	4.1	4.2	55.6%
Suburban Region	6.6	8.0	8.0	8.3	8.0	7.3	6.7	7.1	7.8	7.7	16.7%
Maryland Statewide	7.0	6.6	7.1	8.1	8.9	7.8	7.9	8.4	8.4	8.9	27.1%

Note 1: Suburban region figures are averages and are not directly comparable to county or statewide data.

Note 2: Suspendable offenses are defined locally, so comparisons across jurisdictions are difficult. Fluctuations may result from new standards or changing emphases in enforcement, not necessarily changes in student behavior.

Source: MSDE 2003d.

4.B.3. Violence-related Suspensions

Attempting to come to a new understanding of human motivation, psychologist Abraham Maslow — whose name will be familiar to most educators — posited in his book *Motivation and Personality* that people act to fulfill certain needs that we all hold in common. Most important, he described a sequential hierarchy of the most basic set of these needs, each of which must be fulfilled in turn before we can begin to work on the next one. At the lower end of the hierarchy comes our personal safety, security and comfort; at the upper end comes what Maslow called “self-actualization,” or that bundle of activities and accomplishments that includes academic work and other educational pursuits. In other words, children afraid for their own safety cannot reasonably be expected to focus on their school work, much less excel (UDRH 2004).

As one measure of the extent to which Prince George’s County students feel safe in school, the LMB decided to examine school suspensions — specifically, school suspensions for violence (weapons, attacks/fighting, threats,

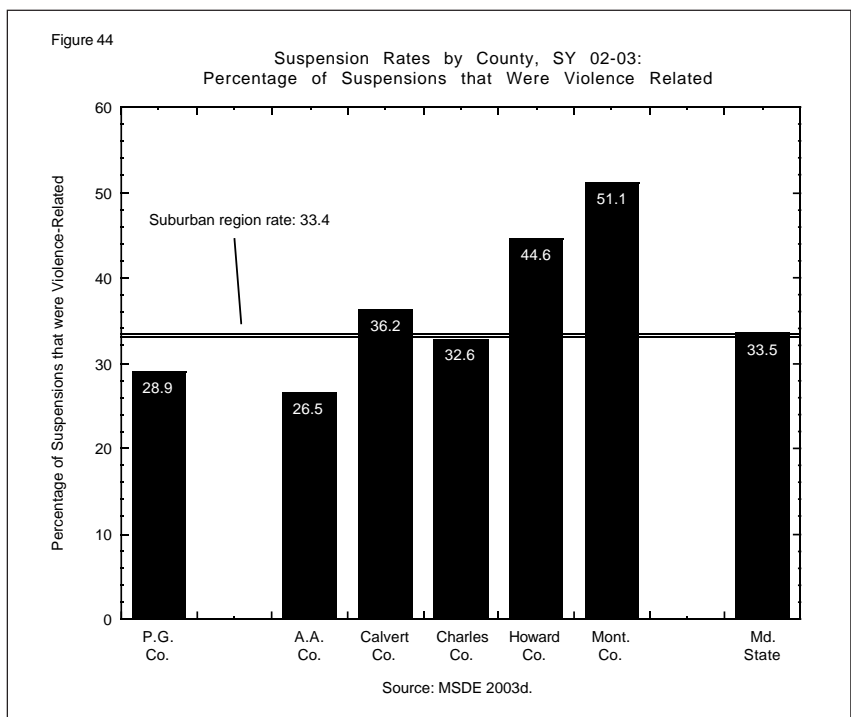
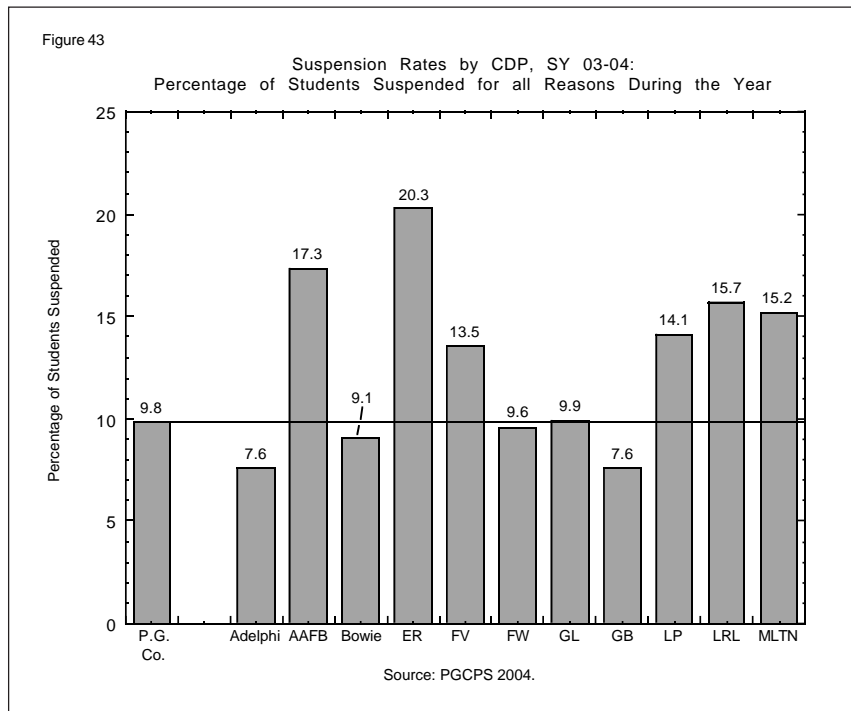
arson and sexual assault). This is a difficult indicator to analyze, however, since criteria for suspending students vary from one county to another, as do definitions of “violence” and even of “suspension” itself. Fluctuations and differences in suspension rates may result from new behavior standards or changing emphases in enforcement, and not necessarily from changes in student behavior. For example, a sharp increase in suspensions one year may indicate a renewed willingness to address a problem that had previously gone unchecked, a positive development with the appearance — in the form of an increased suspension rate — of a negative one. On the other hand, a low rate of suspension may exist in a county with such a severe set of behavior problems in its schools that special interventions — Saturday school, in-school suspension, etc. — are in place as a more direct means of dealing with the problem than suspension. For all of these reasons, the reader should exercise caution in interpreting suspension data.

Table 19 begins our discussion of this indicator, by providing some context. The table shows the percentages of students suspended

for all reasons from SY 1993-94 through SY 2002-2003. As the table shows, Charles County suspended a higher percentage of its student body (12.1 percent) than any other suburban region jurisdiction during SY 2002-03, the most recent year for which data were available. Charles County was followed by Anne Arundel (10.0 percent), Prince George's (9.1 percent), Calvert (6.8 percent), Howard (4.2 percent) and Montgomery (also 4.2 percent) counties. During the same year, the state rate was 8.9 percent while the regional rate was 7.7 percent (MSDE 2003d).

The two counties with the lowest suspension rates — Montgomery and Howard — had nonetheless seen the highest proportional increase in suspensions since SY 1993-94. The highest rate of increase was in Montgomery County, at 55.6 percent, followed by Howard County, at 27.3 percent. These were followed by Charles (14.2 percent), Anne Arundel (13.6 percent), Prince George's (11.0 percent) and Calvert (9.7 percent) counties. Worth noting here is the fact that, excluding Montgomery and Howard counties, it may fairly be said that the rest of the suburban region jurisdictions have suspension rates — and have seen increases in those rates — that are all similar in size (MSDE 2003d).

For a look at the local variations in suspension rates, we turn to figure 43, which shows the



percentages of the students in each suburban region jurisdiction suspended for any reason during SY 2003-04. As the figure shows, the moderate suspension rate in the county as a whole represents considerable variation among the 11 selected CDPs. With suspension rates as high as East Riverdale's 20.3 percent and as low as Greenbelt's and Adelphi's 7.6 percent, the suspension rates seen in these

CDPs suggest, once again, that a one-size-fits-all measure when it comes to addressing the circumstances that lead to suspension would not be appropriate countywide. East Riverdale's high suspension rate is followed by that of Andrews Air Force Base (17.3 percent), Laurel (15.7 percent), Marlton (15.2 percent), Langley Park (14.1 percent), Forestville (13.5 percent), Greater Landover (9.9 percent), Fort Washington (9.6 percent), Bowie (9.1 percent) and (as mentioned above) both Adelphi and Greenbelt, tied for 7.6 percent (PGCPS 2004).

Unfortunately, MSDE-collected suspension data do not include numbers of students suspended for violence, only numbers of suspensions that were violence-related. Since the number of suspensions that were violence-related may include multiple suspensions of some students, there is no way to know how many students were suspended for violence. This has the potential to conceal high rates of violence-related suspensions, since a county with a low percentage of suspensions that were violence-related but with a high overall suspension rate may in fact suspend a larger number of students for violence than a jurisdiction where a high percentage of suspensions were violence-related but which had a low overall suspension rate. Figure 44 presents the percentages of suspensions that were violence-related in each of the suburban jurisdictions, as reported for SY 2002-03. Montgomery County had the largest proportion of suspensions that were violence-related, 51.1 percent, followed by Howard (44.6 percent), Calvert (36.2 percent), Charles (32.6 percent), Prince George's (28.9 percent) and Anne Arundel (26.5 percent) counties. The suburban rate was 33.4 percent, almost identical to the state rate of 33.5 percent (MSDE 2003d).

Of course, it is not particularly informative to compare the percentage of suspensions in each county that were violence-related, since each county suspends a different proportion of its student body. Combining the information in figure 44 and table 19 (i.e., by converting the percentage of each county's suspensions that

were violence-related to a decimal and multiplying it by corresponding percentage of each county's student body suspended for all reasons), it is possible to estimate the approximate percentage of students suspended for violence in SY 2002-03 in each of the suburban region jurisdictions. Ranked from highest to lowest, these estimates are as follows: Charles County (3.9 percent), Anne Arundel County (2.7 percent), Prince George's County (2.6 percent), Calvert County (2.5 percent), Montgomery County (2.1 percent) and Howard County (1.9 percent).

It should be emphasized that these are rough estimates — percentages of percentages — and so should not be used as an absolute basis for comparison. Still, this calculation does suggest that the actual rates of violence-related suspensions are relatively similar — and relatively low — in all of the suburban region jurisdictions, and that Prince George's County's violence-related suspension rate is in the middle of the pack.

4.B.4. Chronic School Absence

Perhaps the starkest measure of a school system's health is how motivated its students are to attend — or avoid — classes. A certain number of absences are to be expected from even the most dedicated students, naturally, but once students have been absent more than a handful of times, it is reasonable to expect that their achievement will suffer. MSDE defines "chronic absence" as 20 or more missed days in the course of one school year, and it was this measure that the LMB selected as its final school-related indicator.

Students may avoid school for any number of reasons, of course, from concerns about personal safety to fears about a challenging test, so the cause for a high absence rate may remain elusive. However, excessive absences in any school system are definitely a red flag and demand closer investigation into possible causes and solutions.

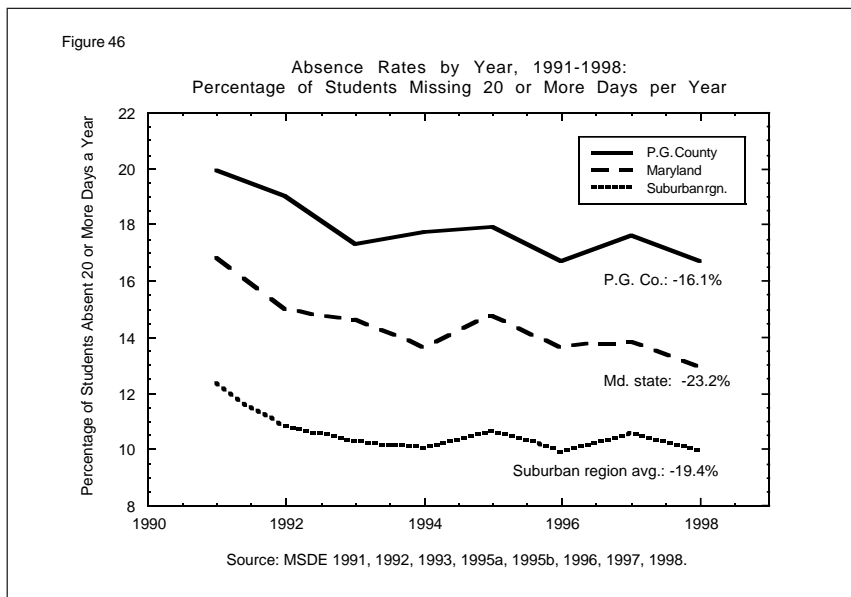
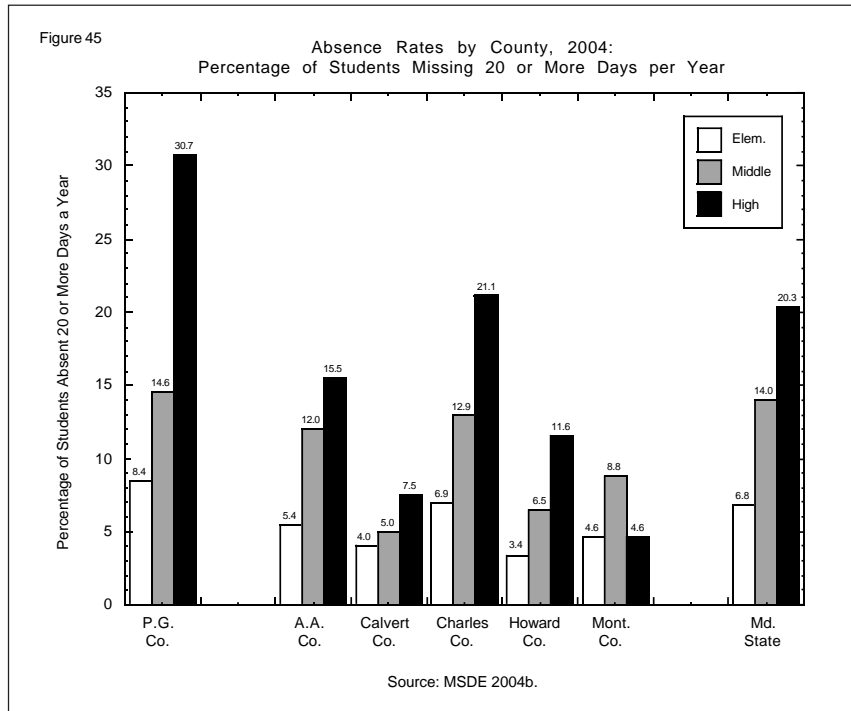
The percentage of elementary, middle and

high school students missing 20 or more days in each of the suburban region jurisdictions is shown on figure 45, for SY 2003-04. The most striking aspect of the graph is the appearance of a stair-step increase in absenteeism from elementary to middle to high school, in the case of all the suburban jurisdictions save Montgomery County, where the absence rate drops again after a rise in the middle school grades. As figure 45 shows, Prince George's County has the highest rate of students missing 20 or more days at all three levels: elementary (8.4 percent); middle (14.6 percent); and high (30.7 percent).

Focusing on high school, where Prince George's County leads by a much greater margin than at the other two levels, the next highest percentage of chronic high school absence is found in Charles County (21.1 percent), followed by Anne Arundel (15.5 percent), Howard (11.6 percent), Calvert (7.5 percent) and Montgomery (4.6 percent) counties (MSDE 2004b).

The ranking of counties by chronic middle school absence is as follows: Prince George's County (14.6 percent); Charles County (12.9 percent); Anne Arundel County (12.0 percent); Montgomery County (8.8 percent); Howard County (6.5 percent); and Calvert County (5.0 percent) (MSDE 2004b).

The ranking of counties by chronic elementary



school absence is as follows: Prince George's County (8.4 percent); Charles County (6.9 percent); Anne Arundel County (5.4 percent); Montgomery County (4.6 percent); Calvert County (4.0 percent); and Howard County (3.4 percent) (MSDE 2004b).

To place these results in their historical context, we now turn to four graphs that, together, show chronic absence trends 1991-2004 in Prince George's County, the suburban region as a whole, and the state of Maryland. The first graph, figure 46, shows the percentage of

Figure 47

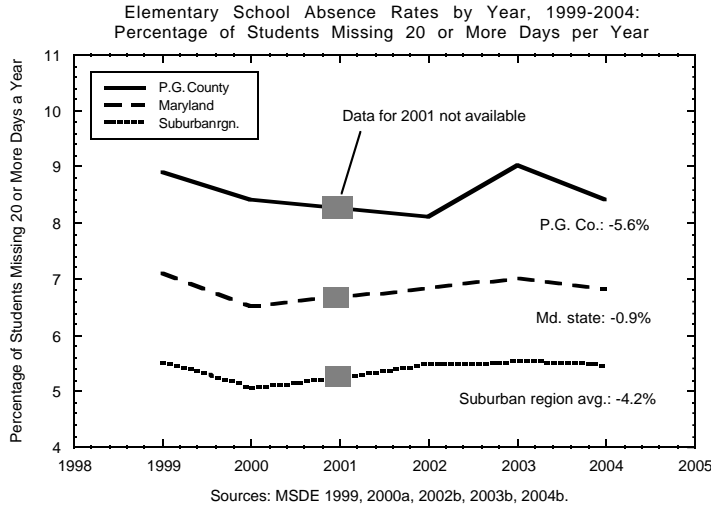


Figure 48

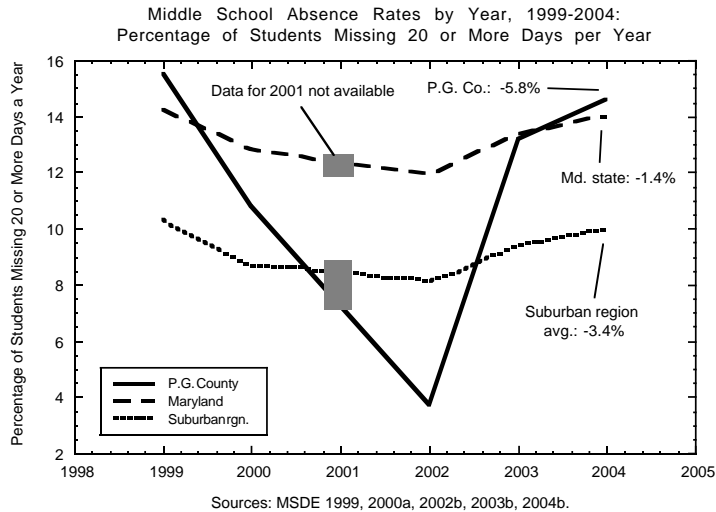
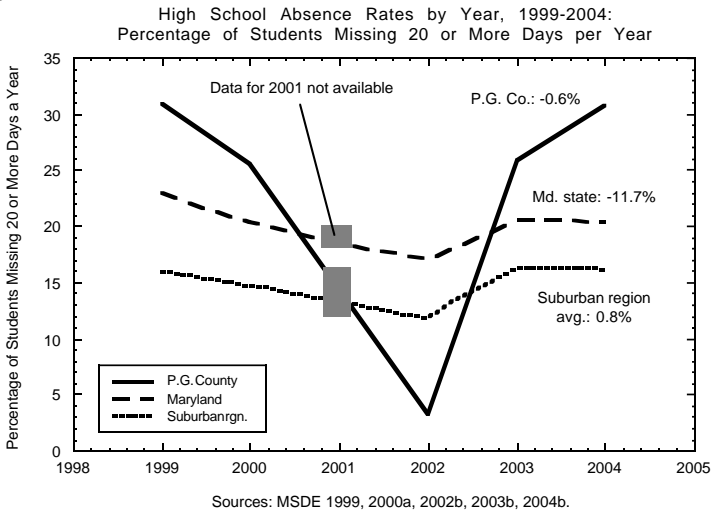


Figure 49



all students missing 20 or more days per year from 1991 through 1998 (MSDE data do not distinguish between elementary, middle and high school data for these years); figures 47, 48 and 49 continue the story 1999-2004 (with MSDE data for 2001 unavailable) for elementary, middle and high school, respectively.

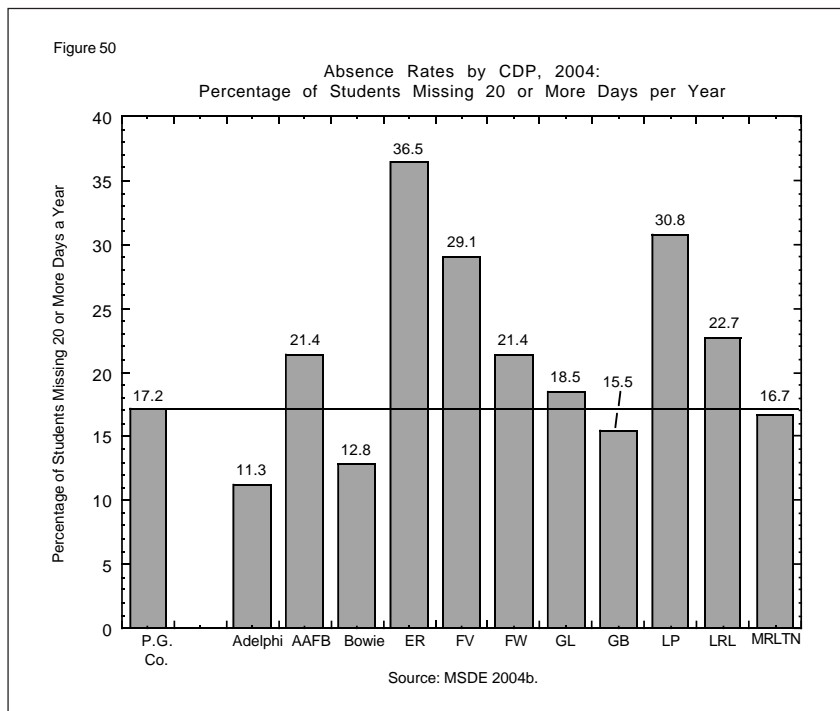
Figure 46, "Absence Rates by Year, 1991-1998," shows almost parallel downward trends in the percentage of students missing 20 or more days per year in Prince George's County, the state of Maryland as a whole, and the suburban region as a whole. The Prince George's County trend line is consistently higher than the other two, and shows a proportional decrease in the percentage of chronically absent students of 16.1 percent. The trend line representing chronic absences statewide is below Prince George's County's line and above the suburban region's. Statewide, there was a proportional decrease of 23.2 percent. Consistently lower than the other two, the suburban region's trend line depicts a proportional decrease of 19.4 percent. In other words, from 1991-1998, Prince George's County consistently had a higher percentage of chronically absent students than did the state or suburban region. All three rates decreased during this period, although Prince

George's County's decreased significantly less than did the state's or region's rate (MSDE 1991, 1992, 1993, 1995a, 1995b, 1996, 1997, 1998).

Picking up the story in 1999, figure 47 shows trend lines for chronic elementary school absence from that year through 2004, for Prince George's County, Maryland and the suburban region as a whole. Once again, the Prince George's County trend line is consistently higher than that of either the state or the region; however, all three lines appear more stable than those in figure 46. Prince George's County saw the largest decrease in chronic elementary school over this time period, 5.6 percent. The state of Maryland, whose trend line was below Prince George's County's and above the suburban region's, saw a small decrease of 0.9 percent. The rate of chronic elementary school absence, meanwhile, decreased 4.2 percent 1999-2004 (MSDE 1999, 2000a, 2002b, 2003b, 2004b).

Shifting our focus to middle school chronic absence, figure 48 shows the percentage of middle school students missing 20 or more days per year, 1999-2004. As a glance at the graph will show, the MSDE-reported data for Prince George's County appears anomalous for the year 2002, when — according to these data — the proportion of chronically absent middle schoolers dropped from almost 11 percent in 2000 (2001 data not available) to less than 5 percent in 2002, only to have increased to more than 12 percent by 2003 (MSDE 1999, 2000a, 2002b, 2003b, 2004b).

Disregarding the middle of Prince George's County's trend line on figure 48, however, the beginning and end of the line appear more realistic, and so it is possible to calculate a



credible proportional decrease in chronic middle school absence during these years of 5.8 percent. Accepting this figure for the sake of argument, the county's decrease is much larger than the decreases seen statewide (1.4 percent) and in the suburban region (3.4 percent). The beginning and end of the Prince George's County trend line are very similar to the state trend line, suggesting that county middle schoolers are chronically absent at around the same rate as middle schoolers statewide. Meanwhile, the suburban region trend line is significantly lower than the recent sections of the Prince George's County and Maryland trend lines (MSDE 1999, 2000a, 2002b, 2003b, 2004b).

Like the graph showing chronic middle school absence, figure 49, which shows rates of chronic high school absence in Prince George's County, the suburban region and the state for the years 1999-2004, also shows anomalous-looking data for the year 2002. Once again disregarding the middle of the county's trend line, the beginning and end present more realistic-looking data and so the rate of proportional decrease, 0.6 percent, seems likely to be accurate. The county's rate of decrease is much less than the state's (11.7 percent), although the suburban region as a whole actu-

Table 20

School Registration Trends by County and Year, 1995-2004:
Number of Children Enrolled in Public School by Jurisdiction

Jurisdiction	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	+/- %
Prince George's Co.	118,478	122,415	125,198	128,347	130,259	131,452	133,948	134,752	136,861	136,934	15.6%
Anne Arundel Co.	70,588	71,383	72,322	73,363	74,079	72,800	73,384	73,846	73,607	73,283	3.8%
Calvert Co.	12,819	13,496	14,152	14,736	15,241	15,686	16,156	16,666	17,074	17,315	35.1%
Charles Co.	20,419	20,966	21,159	21,620	22,263	22,714	23,275	23,917	24,661	25,635	25.5%
Howard Co.	36,125	37,547	38,857	40,215	41,858	43,539	44,938	45,906	46,742	47,396	31.2%
Montgomery Co.	117,082	120,291	122,505	125,023	127,933	131,863	134,527	137,170	138,786	139,072	18.8%
Suburban Region	375,511	386,098	394,193	403,304	411,633	418,054	426,228	432,257	437,731	439,635	17.1%
Maryland Statewide	790,938	805,544	818,583	830,744	841,671	840,772	848,386	855,332	860,895	861,415	8.9%

Source: MSDE 2004b.

ally saw an increase of 0.8 percent. The Prince George's County trend line is — in the more recent section of the graph — well above the state trend line, which is in turn significantly higher than the suburban region trend line (MSDE 1999, 2000a, 2002b, 2003b, 2004b).

Figure 50 gives a taste of chronic absenteeism at the sub-county level, showing the 2004 absence rates for the 11 selected CDPs across all grade levels. Keeping in mind that the countywide rate of chronically absent students, 17.2 percent, conceals the much higher 30.7 percent rate of chronic absence among the county's high schoolers, it gives some pause to learn that a CDP such as East Riverdale has a rate of chronic absence across all grades in excess of 36 percent (making East Riverdale's third-grade MSA reading scores, discussed in section 4.B.2 above, all the more remarkable). When the CDPs are ranked by rate of chronic absenteeism, East Riverdale is followed by Langley Park (30.8 percent), Forestville (29.1 percent), Laurel (22.7 percent), Andrews Air Force Base and Fort Washington (both 21.4 percent), Greater Landover (18.5 percent), Marlton (16.7 percent), Greenbelt (15.5 percent), Bowie (12.8 percent) and Adelphi (11.3 percent) (MSDE 2004b).

Though these CDPs are not a precise representation of the rest of the county, it is plain that there are parts of the county with a pressing absenteeism problem. Indeed, the county itself has the highest rate of chronic absence in the suburban region, a situation that has existed for many years. Whether chronic absenteeism is a cause of other problems in school, or a result of them, it is clear that this indicator deserves a closer look.

As a footnote, it is worth considering here one popular explanation for Prince George's County's relatively poor showing on school-related indicators: that concerned parents with the means to do so tend to send their children to private school, thus removing those children with better preparation and at-home support from the public school population, further weakening the county's schools and inspiring even more parents to follow suit. This line of reasoning would suggest that, the worse a school system performs, the more parents will transfer their children to private school, and vice versa. Therefore, the thinking goes, Prince George's County's low test scores, high rate of chronic absence and low level of kindergarten readiness both result from and,

Table 21

School Registration Trends by County and Year, 1999-2003:
Number of Children Enrolled in Private School by Jurisdiction

Jurisdiction	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	+/- %
Prince George's Co.	22,134	23,082	24,358	23,378	22,424	1.31%
Anne Arundel Co.	16,953	18,239	18,750	19,266	18,488	9.1%
Calvert Co.	1,095	1,159	1,365	1,377	1,404	28.2%
Charles Co.	3,247	3,783	3,431	3,422	3,532	8.8%
Howard Co.	8,495	8,901	9,080	9,729	9,334	9.9%
Montgomery Co.	41,943	42,953	42,622	42,373	43,242	3.1%
Suburban Region	94,047	98,117	99,606	99,545	98,424	4.7%
Maryland Statewide	181,086	187,100	189,093	190,199	187,407	3.5%

Note: As reported by private schools. Non-Maryland residents not included. Jurisdiction is location of school, not residence of student.

Source: MSDE 2000b, 2001a, 2002a, 2003c.

in an ongoing cycle, result in disproportionate number of students being transferred to private schools. In a higher performing school

district such as Montgomery County, then, one would expect to find a relatively low rate of private school attendance.

Table 22

School Registration Trends by County and Year, 1999-2003:
Children Enrolled in Private School by Jurisdiction, as Percentage of
Public School Enrollment

Jurisdiction	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	+/- %
Prince George's Co.	17.1	17.6	18.2	17.4	16.4	-4.1
Anne Arundel Co.	22.9	25.1	25.6	26.1	25.1	9.6
Calvert Co.	7.2	7.4	8.5	8.3	8.2	13.9
Charles Co.	14.6	16.7	14.7	14.3	14.3	-2.1
Howard Co.	20.3	20.4	20.2	21.2	20.0	-1.5
Montgomery Co.	32.8	32.6	31.7	30.9	31.2	-4.9
Suburban Region	22.9	23.5	23.4	23.0	22.5	-1.7
Maryland Statewide	21.5	22.3	22.3	22.2	21.8	1.4

Note: As reported by private schools. Non-Maryland residents not included. Jurisdiction is location of school, not residence of student.

Source: MSDE 2000b, 2001a, 2002a, 2003c.

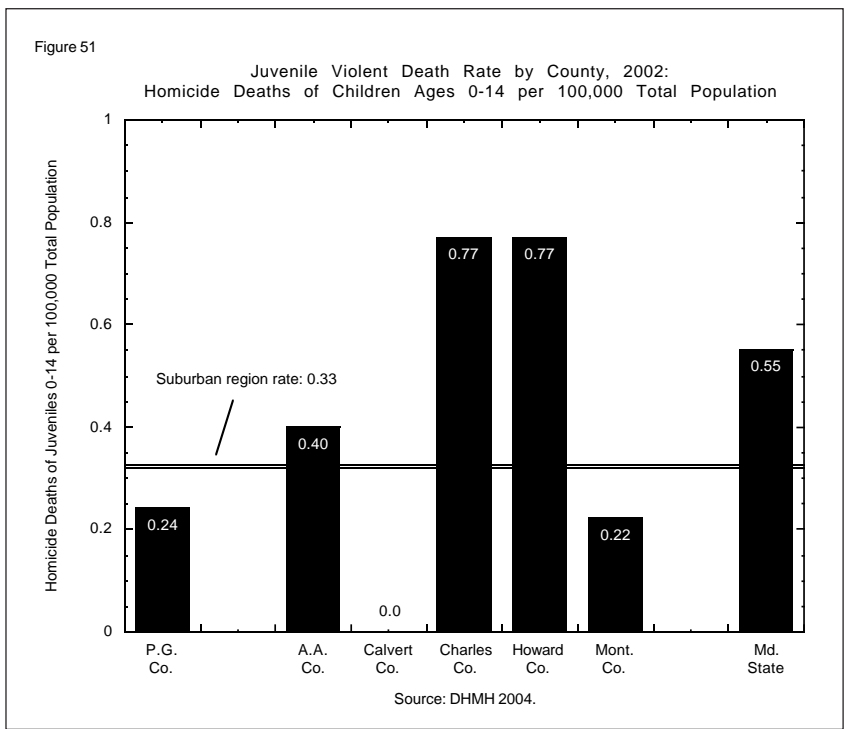
The possibility is intriguing, though the data presented in tables 20, 21 and 22 do not support it. These tables present (a) the number of children enrolled in public school in each of the suburban region jurisdictions (table 20), (b) the number of children enrolled in private schools in each of the suburban region jurisdictions (table 21), and (c) the latter as percentages of the former (table 22), all for the years 1999-2003.

Skipping to table 22 first, it is plain to see that Prince George’s County ranks fourth among suburban region jurisdictions when the number of private school enrollees is presented as a percentage of public school enrollees, a proportion, moreover, that decreased 4.1 percent between 1999 and 2003. The jurisdiction with the largest rate of private school enrollees compared to public school enrollees was Montgomery County, with 31.2 percent, followed by Anne Arundel County (25.1 percent), Howard County (20.0 percent), Prince George’s County (16.4 percent), Charles County (14.3 percent) and Calvert County (8.2 percent) (MSDE 2000b, 2001a, 2001b, 2002a, 2003c). These figures would appear to contradict the theory presented two paragraphs ago, since Montgomery County, a relatively high-performing school system, has the highest rate

of private school enrollment in the suburban region. One possible answer to this contradiction is the fact that the private school enrollment data presented in tables 21 and 22 are reported by MSDE according to the jurisdiction the school is in, not the students’ jurisdictions of residence, and so it could still be the case that a disproportionate number of Prince George’s County children attend private schools in other jurisdictions. However, this possibility seems unlikely to account for more than a small percentage of Prince George’s County children enrolled in private schools.

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

As the most vulnerable members of any community, children often feel the worst effects of a variety of threats to their health, their mental well-being and their physical safety. Concerned with whether or not Prince George’s County children are safe even outside of the county’s immediate supervision (such as at school), the LMB decided to look at three indicators (with several subindicators) as a measure of children’s safety in the county: (a) juvenile violent deaths, (b) child abuse and neglect and (c) juvenile arrests (subdivided into homicide, violent crimes and property crimes).



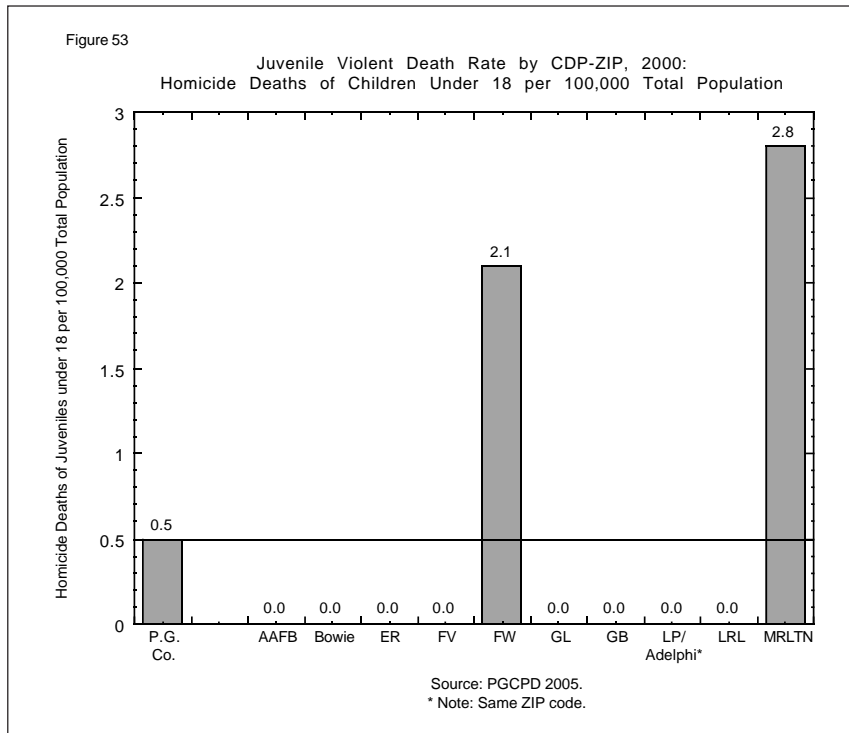
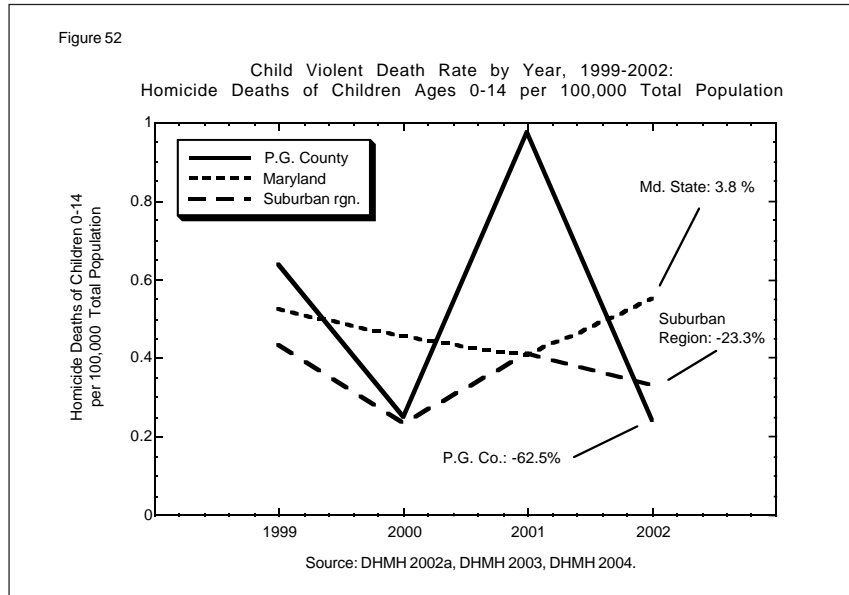
4.C.1. Juvenile Violent Deaths

Other than in Baltimore City, juveniles in Maryland are so rarely the victims of homicide that is difficult to accurately identify and analyze trends in juvenile violent deaths. So few 0-14 year-olds (the closest approximation of “under 18” that is available from the DHMH-reported data) are murdered from year to year in any jurisdiction in the suburban region that an increase of only two or three

may constitute an apparently massive proportional increase compared to the preceding year. All the same, the thought of any child murdered is a distressing one, and all county officials and residents are of course willing to take whatever steps are needed to protect even one child from being victimized at such an early age.

A snapshot of juvenile murders in the suburban region in 2002 (see figure 51) shows Prince George's County in the middle range of area juvenile murder rates. Tied for the highest rate, Charles and Howard counties saw 0.77 juvenile murders per 100,000 total population, followed by Anne Arundel (0.40 per 100,000), Prince George's (0.24 per 100,000), Montgomery (0.22 per 100,000) and Calvert (0 juvenile murders that year) counties. The Prince George's County rate was significantly lower than both the region's (0.33 per 100,000) and the state's (0.55 per 100,000) (DHMH 2004).

The county's relatively low juvenile murder rate has not always been thus, as a glance at figure 52 will demonstrate. Again, the reader is cautioned that the very low number of juvenile homicides in any year creates a highly unstable rate that may appear to fluctuate wildly while continuing to affect only a tiny number of people. That said, it is apparent from figure 52 that the Prince George's County juvenile homicide rate was much higher in 2001 than it was in 2002, and well above the



state and regional rates as well. While it would be a mistake to use such unstable data to describe trends, it is true that the Prince George's County juvenile homicide rate per 100,000 dropped 62.5 percent between 1999 and 2002, as compared to a regional decrease of 23.3 percent and a statewide increase of 3.8 percent (DHMH 2002a, DHMH 2003, DHMH 2004).

The local view (figure 53), showing juvenile homicide rates for the 11 selected CDPs, is

based on Prince George's County Police Department data. Since these data are reported by single year of age, it is possible to consider murders of juveniles under 18 rather than under 15, as was necessary in the previous two paragraphs. With this change, the countywide rate of juvenile (ages 0-17) homicides in 2000 (the most recent year for which local-level population data are available) becomes 0.5 per 100,000. But even with this expanded pool of potentially affected population, figure 53 makes clear that the vast majority of Prince George's County neighborhoods never see a juvenile homicide. Only Marlton and Fort Washington saw any at all, and it should be pointed out here that both CDPs saw only one juvenile homicide in the year in question. Because of differences in population size, however, the two rates varied: Marlton's rate of juvenile homicides per 100,000 was 2.8, while Fort Washington's was 2.1 (PGCPD 2005).

The facts as reported above do not suggest that juvenile homicides are a particularly pressing problem in Prince George's County. They are extremely rare, as rare in this county as in the neighboring jurisdictions. However, it may still be worth considering juvenile homicide as only a piece of a larger, future inquiry into the extent to which county youths experience violence, even non-fatal violence. Certainly, a low juvenile homicide rate is no justification for ignoring other forms of violence committed against our county's young people.

4.C.2. Child Abuse and Neglect

The offenses against children under consideration in this section include physical abuse, neglect and sexual abuse. In a very real sense — and perhaps even more so than with crimes against adults — both the victim and society at large pay a steep price for crimes committed against children, because of the anti-social and even criminal behavior that such child victims are at an increased risk of exhibiting as a result of their victimization.

Table 23 shows child maltreatment data collected and organized by Maryland's Child Protective Services (CPS), an agency that coordinates law enforcement and other interventions on behalf of abused or neglected youth. CPS distinguishes between investigations and "indicated cases," or those cases in which initial investigation uncovers what CPS calls "credible evidence" that some form of maltreatment actually occurred, although an "indicated case" will not necessarily result in a prosecution (CPS 2003). Table 23 shows "indicated cases" for the suburban region jurisdictions, broken down into the categories of physical abuse, neglect and sexual abuse, as well as totals for all investigations with indicated findings (categories not listed on table 23 but included in the "total investigations" are "mental injury abuse," "mental injury neglect" and "other").

For Prince George's County, the bad news comes before the good news on table 23. The county's total investigations with indicated findings per 10,000 total population is 10.52, the highest among the suburban county jurisdictions. To be fair, the county's rate is not much higher than the second- and third-place jurisdictions, Anne Arundel (10.32 per 10,000) and Charles (10.07 per 10,000) counties, and the statewide rate is much higher (13.24 per 10,000). However, the Prince George's County rate is higher than that of the suburban region as a whole, 8.10 per 10,000, and the county's proportional decrease in investigations with indicated findings since 1996, 38.0 per 10,000, is smaller than that of both Charles (43.4 percent) and Calvert (38.3 percent) counties. The county's decrease did exceed both the state's and the region's, 27.0 and 31.8 percent, respectively (BC 2001, 2004c; CPS 2003; DOP 2000b; DHMH 1995, 1996, 1997, 1998, 1999, 2001, 2002b).

The reason Prince George's County leads in total investigations with indicated findings is because it leads — by a healthy margin — in rate of physical abuse cases (as will be discussed below, the county has the third-lowest rate of both neglect and sexual abuse cases).

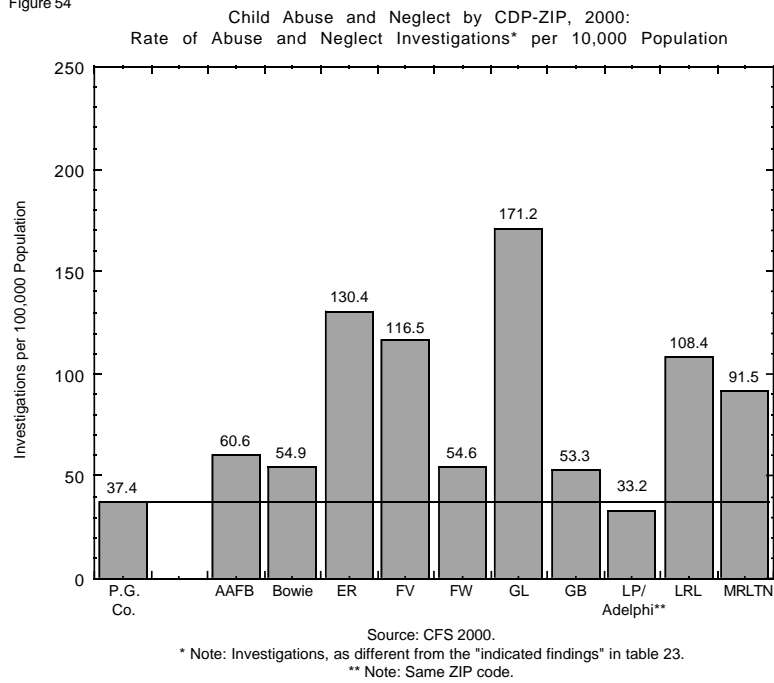
Table 23

Child Maltreatment Rate Trends by County and Year, 1996-2003:
Cases with Indicated Findings per 10,000 Total County Population

Jurisdiction	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	+/- %
Total Investigations with Indicated Findings									
Prince George's Co.	16.95	16.11	15.95	15.46	12.61	12.61	12.84	10.52	-38.0%
Anne Arundel Co.	12.62	10.54	9.29	9.18	11.17	11.64	10.51	10.32	-18.2%
Calvert Co.	13.49	8.08	8.92	10.44	8.72	10.55	8.53	8.32	-38.3%
Charles Co.	17.78	11.89	6.52	3.72	12.36	11.58	10.31	10.07	-43.4%
Howard Co.	12.14	9.30	11.06	8.39	9.89	10.53	8.11	7.83	-35.5%
Montgomery Co.	5.68	5.99	7.53	5.39	5.70	5.97	5.17	4.44	-21.8%
Suburban Region	11.87	10.63	10.78	9.54	9.65	9.90	9.14	8.10	-31.8%
Maryland Statewide	18.13	17.43	15.41	15.67	15.24	14.62	13.83	13.24	-27.0%
Physical Abuse Investigations with Indicated Findings									
Prince George's Co.	8.27	7.66	7.88	7.24	5.79	6.18	6.51	5.16	-37.5%
Anne Arundel Co.	3.93	3.58	2.65	3.37	3.78	3.86	2.92	3.08	-21.7%
Calvert Co.	4.94	3.90	2.51	4.47	3.89	4.25	2.47	3.69	-25.5%
Charles Co.	8.76	5.38	2.63	1.24	5.06	3.75	3.25	2.63	-70.0%
Howard Co.	4.29	3.15	3.96	3.17	3.27	3.41	2.38	2.50	-41.7%
Montgomery Co.	1.70	1.68	2.31	1.50	1.87	1.51	1.04	0.97	-42.9%
Suburban Region	2.24	1.89	1.84	1.63	1.99	1.85	1.35	1.37	-38.8%
Maryland Statewide	6.17	5.74	5.19	4.88	4.88	4.51	4.16	3.84	-37.7%
Neglect Investigations with Indicated Findings									
Prince George's Co.	5.47	6.08	5.99	6.32	5.28	5.39	4.31	3.62	-33.7%
Anne Arundel Co.	5.78	4.49	4.42	4.47	4.86	5.51	5.22	5.31	-8.2%
Calvert Co.	5.84	2.16	3.76	2.44	2.68	3.86	2.72	2.38	-59.3%
Charles Co.	5.31	4.34	3.05	1.90	5.06	5.43	4.80	5.34	0.5%
Howard Co.	5.85	5.11	5.57	4.07	5.04	5.48	4.31	3.71	-36.6%
Montgomery Co.	2.21	2.51	3.63	2.84	2.87	2.89	2.67	2.20	-0.6%
Suburban Region	4.48	4.31	4.67	4.27	4.29	4.54	3.91	3.51	-21.6%
Maryland Statewide	8.77	8.85	7.78	8.65	8.08	7.88	7.23	7.03	-19.9%
Sexual Abuse Investigations with Indicated Findings									
Prince George's Co.	3.22	2.36	2.06	1.89	1.55	1.04	2.02	1.73	-46.3%
Anne Arundel Co.	2.90	2.41	2.19	1.27	2.49	2.17	2.30	1.88	-35.4%
Calvert Co.	2.70	2.02	2.65	3.39	2.15	2.32	3.34	2.02	-25.1%
Charles Co.	3.72	2.17	0.85	0.58	2.24	2.40	2.17	2.10	-43.4%
Howard Co.	2.01	1.05	1.53	1.11	1.57	1.64	1.42	1.63	-19.0%
Montgomery Co.	1.77	1.73	1.57	1.00	0.89	1.47	1.44	1.23	-30.6%
Suburban Region	2.57	2.02	1.83	1.38	1.56	1.55	1.87	1.61	-37.6%
Maryland Statewide	3.19	2.81	2.41	2.09	2.24	2.18	2.40	2.32	-27.3%

Source: BC 2001, 2004c; CPS 2003; DOP 2000b.

Figure 54



The county's rate of physical abuse investigations with indicated findings is 5.16 per 10,000 total population, a rate quite a bit higher than the closest follower-up, Calvert County, with a rate of 3.69 per 10,000. Calvert County is followed by Anne Arundel (3.08 per 10,000), Charles (2.63 per 10,000), Howard (2.50 per 10,000) and Montgomery (0.97 per 10,000) counties. Prince George's County had the fourth-highest rate of decrease in indicated physical abuse cases since 1996, 37.5 percent. Charles County had the largest decrease since 1996, 70.0 percent, followed by Montgomery (42.9 percent) and Howard (41.7 percent) counties. The county's rate of decrease was very close to both the regional and state rates of decrease, 38.8 and 37.7 percent, respectively (BC 2001, 2004c; CPS 2003; DOP 2000b; DHMH 1995, 1996, 1997, 1998, 1999, 2001, 2002b).

Turning to cases of neglect, we now find better news for Prince George's County, at least relatively speaking. With a rate of indicated neglect cases per 10,000 of only 3.62, the county is third lowest when ranked with its suburban region neighbors. Charles County has the highest rate of neglect cases, 5.34 per 10,000, followed by Anne Arundel (5.31), Howard (3.71), Prince George's (3.62), Calvert (2.38)

and Montgomery (2.20) counties. And while Prince George's County still has only the third-highest rate of decrease in neglect cases since 1996, 33.7 percent, it is nonetheless true that the county is among only three jurisdictions that have particularly significant decreases at all: Calvert (59.3 percent decrease) and Howard (36.6 percent decrease) counties are the other two. Below the Prince George's County rate of decrease comes that of Anne Arundel (8.2 percent) and Montgomery (0.6 percent) counties, while Charles County saw a 0.5 percent

increase. Prince George's County handily exceeded both the regional (21.6 percent) and state (19.9 percent) decreases (BC 2001, 2004c; CPS 2003; DOP 2000b; DHMH 1995, 1996, 1997, 1998, 1999, 2001, 2002b).

As with neglect cases, Prince George's County is also third lowest among the suburban region jurisdictions in rate of indicated sexual abuse cases. All of the suburban region jurisdictions have relatively low rates of indicated sexual abuse cases, with Charles County leading (2.10 cases per 10,000 total population). Charles County is followed by Calvert (2.02 per 10,000), Anne Arundel (1.88 per 10,000), Prince George's (1.73 per 10,000), Howard (1.63 per 10,000) and Montgomery (1.23 per 10,000) counties. The Prince George's County rate was higher than the suburban region rate (1.61 per 10,000) but lower than the statewide rate (2.32 per 10,000). Finally, Prince George's County had the largest rate of decrease in indicated cases of sexual abuse among the suburban jurisdictions, 46.3 percent. This exceeded both the regional (37.6 percent) and state (27.3 percent) decreases by a significant margin (BC 2001, 2004c; CPS 2003; DOP 2000b; DHMH 1995, 1996, 1997, 1998, 1999, 2001, 2002b).

State CPS data are not available by local CDPs or ZIP codes, and so figure 54 relies instead on data reported by the Prince George's County Department of Social Services' Child and Family Services Division. These data, in turn, do not identify the cases with "indicated findings," and so figure 54 shows all abuse and neglect investigations in the selected CDPs for 2000 (the most recent year for which local-level population data were available), regardless of whether or not "credible evidence" was found of abuse or neglect. As a rough estimate of the magnitude by which the total number of investigations can exceed the total number of cases with "indicated findings," consider that the total investigations rate given for Prince George's County in figure 54 was 37.4 per 10,000, while the total investigations with indicated findings (see table 23, above) in 2000 was only 12.61 per 10,000 (CFS 2000).

Greater Landover led the pack with a rate of abuse and neglect investigations of 171.2 per 10,000 total population. Greater Landover was followed by East Riverdale (130.4 per 10,000), Forestville (116.5 per 10,000), Laurel (108.4 per 10,000), Marlton (91.5 per 10,000), Andrews Air Force Base (60.6 per 10,000), Bowie (54.9 per 10,000), Fort Washington (54.6 per 10,000), Greenbelt (53.3 per 10,000) and Langley Park/Adelphi (33.2 per 10,000) (CFS 2000). Though it would be hasty to attempt to assign a definite cause for a high rate of child abuse (which, one assumes, might exist in an area with a high rate of child abuse investigations), it is interesting that the two CDPs with the highest rates of child-abuse investigations — Greater Landover and East Riverdale — had the highest rates of births to teen mothers as well (see section 4.A.3), while East Riverdale students were also poorly prepared for school and had the highest rates of both suspensions and chronic absence from school. This pattern is immediately broken by Forestville, however, which was third place in abuse investigations but closer to the bottom in teen births (CFS 2000).

At any rate, while it is beyond the scope of this

report to determine the precise causes of child abuse and neglect in Prince George's County, it seems safe to say that the county's record in this area does not suggest the most pressing of problems. With relatively low rates of child sexual abuse and neglect, the county need only devote itself to reducing its child physical abuse rate to drop out of the lead in overall indicated cases of child abuse and neglect. And with the county's solid rates of decrease in all of these categories, including physical abuse, it seems a manageable task, realistically accomplishable in the near term.

4.C.3. Juvenile Arrests

From the victimization of children we now turn to consideration of those children who victimize others. Few crimes grab headlines as easily as those committed by the young, since many people have difficulty reconciling the supposed innocence of youth with the actions of juvenile criminals. For this reason, county residents cannot be blamed for believing — as much of the nation does — that we are in the midst of an unprecedented and worsening epidemic of crimes committed by young people. But is this the case, or is it an example of an unwarranted notoriety? To investigate the extent to which Prince George's County youth are the authors of crimes committed against other county residents, the LMB selected "juvenile arrests" as the most readily available measure of this phenomenon, with the following subindicators: (a) juvenile property crime arrests, (b) juvenile homicide arrests and (c) juvenile violent crime arrests.

As a footnote, the discussion below uses the rates of juvenile arrests in the various categories as reflective of the actual rates of juvenile crimes, which of course may not always be the case. However, unlike crime rates writ large, it is not possible to identify a crime as "juvenile" until a juvenile is apprehended — until then, it is recorded simply as a crime.

4.C.3.1. Juvenile Property Crime Arrests

By far the most common category of arrests of

Table 24

Juvenile Arrest Rates by County and Year, 1994-2003:
Arrests of Juveniles per 100,000 Total Population for Property Crime*

Jurisdiction	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	+/- %
Prince George's Co.	253.43	229.75	235.01	227.84	223.19	180.49	179.16	148.70	149.32	123.88	-51.1%
Anne Arundel Co.	346.56	334.81	385.09	351.63	306.73	274.72	286.73	310.90	276.33	280.68	-19.0%
Calvert Co.	341.68	404.01	370.12	323.21	288.47	233.23	221.29	253.47	159.44	135.54	-60.3%
Charles Co.	436.54	483.30	505.22	474.74	488.73	418.37	409.80	336.97	400.65	426.91	-2.2%
Howard Co.	258.87	251.76	273.23	289.61	205.43	218.01	237.25	220.04	194.91	185.80	-28.2%
Montgomery Co.	107.19	125.09	117.50	111.39	111.18	100.80	99.73	89.05	85.26	84.99	-20.7%
Suburban Region	233.28	233.03	243.86	232.22	214.26	187.99	190.15	177.63	168.00	160.80	-31.1%
Maryland Statewide	315.62	294.41	307.86	289.05	258.05	233.56	234.61	216.93	208.15	221.44	-29.8%

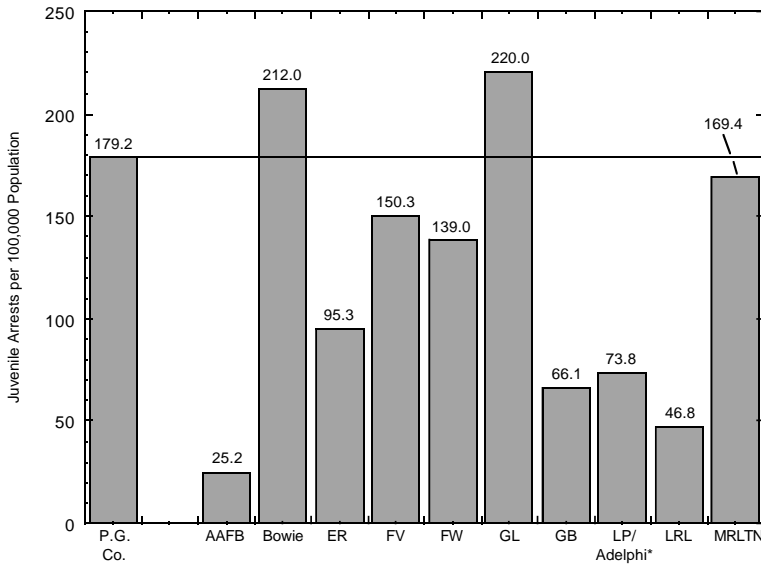
* Property crime is defined by the Maryland State Police as breaking/entering, larceny/theft and vehicle theft.

Source: MSP 2004.

juveniles in the suburban region, property crime is defined by the Maryland State Police as breaking and entering, larceny, theft and vehicle theft. Table 24 details the rate of property-crime arrests of juveniles in the suburban region jurisdictions, 1994-2003. In all cases, the rates have been declining since 1994, some more than others. Prince George's County is

near the bottom of the suburban region jurisdictions with a rate of only 123.88 per 100,000 total population, as opposed to the leader in this indicator, Charles County, with a rate of 426.91 per 100,000. Ranking the jurisdictions in descending order, Charles County is followed by Anne Arundel (280.68 per 100,000), Howard (185.80 per 100,000), Calvert (135.54 per 100,000), Prince George's (123.88 per 100,000) and Montgomery (84.99 per 100,000) counties (MSP 2004).

Figure 55
Juvenile Arrest Rates by CDP-ZIP, 2000:
Arrests of Juveniles per 100,000 Total Population for Property Crime



Source: PGCPD 2005.
* Note: Same ZIP code.

Prince George's County can be proud of having not only the second-lowest rate of juvenile property crime arrests in the suburban region, but also the second-largest rate of decrease in such arrests, 1994-2003. The largest decrease was in Calvert County (60.3 percent), followed by Prince George's (51.1 percent), Howard (28.2 percent), Montgomery (20.7 percent), Anne Arundel (19.0 per-

Table 25

Juvenile Arrest Rates by County and Year, 1994-2003:
Arrests of Juveniles per 100,000 Total Population for Murder*

Jurisdiction	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	+/- %
Prince George's Co.	2.13	1.72	1.44	1.69	2.06	1.79	0.62	0.37	0.60	0.24	-88.7%
Anne Arundel Co.	0.88	0.22	0.43	0.43	1.05	0.00	0.41	1.21	0.40	0.20	-77.3%
Calvert Co.	1.61	0.00	0.00	1.44	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	-10.6%
Charles Co.	0.00	1.80	4.42	0.87	0.85	0.00	0.83	0.00	0.00	0.00	-53.9%
Howard Co.	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.43	0.00	0.40	0.00	0.00	0.00	-7.0%
Montgomery Co.	0.50	0.00	0.49	0.12	0.00	0.35	0.11	0.00	0.00	0.44	-12.0%
Suburban Region	1.05	0.66	0.90	0.73	0.91	0.67	0.38	0.34	0.26	0.25	-76.2%
Maryland Statewide	2.07	2.55	2.99	1.41	1.38	0.97	1.04	1.04	0.42	0.74	-64.3%

* Due to the small number of annual juvenile arrests for murder, these data should be interpreted with extreme caution. In some counties, one additional arrest per year may be a 100 percent or more increase in the arrest rate.

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

Source: MSP 2004.

cent) and Charles (2.2 percent) counties (MSP 2004).

At the local level, only two of the selected CDPs exceeded the countywide rate of juvenile property crime arrests (see figure 55): Greater

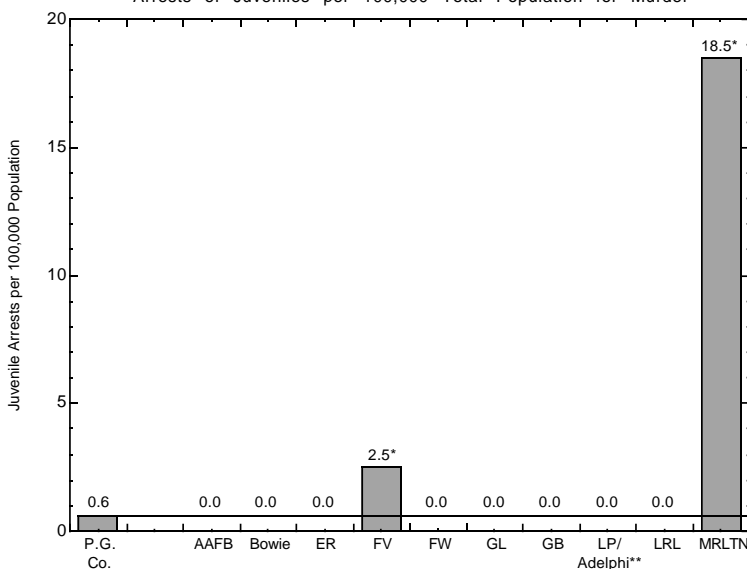
Landover and Bowie, where the rates were 212.0 and 220.0 per 100,000, respectively. Without making too much out of what might be mere coincidence, it is nonetheless interesting that Greater Landover also has the highest rate of abuse and neglect investigations in the suburban region (see section 4.C.2 above). Greater Landover and Bowie are followed by Marlton (169.4 per 100,000), Forestville (150.3 per 100,000), Fort Washington (139.0 per 100,000), East Riverdale (95.3 per 100,000), Langley Park/Adelphi (73.8 per 100,000), Greenbelt (66.1 per 100,000), Laurel (46.8 per 100,000) and Andrews Air Force Base (25.2 per 100,000) (PGCPD 2005).

4.C.3.2. Juvenile Homicide Arrests

Murders committed by juveniles are among the most shocking of crimes to the general public, tending to excite people's fears and passions out of all proportion to the actual frequency with which they

Figure 56

Juvenile Arrest Rates by CDP-ZIP, 2000:
Arrests of Juveniles per 100,000 Total Population for Murder



Source: PGCPD 2005.
* Note: 1 murder in 2000.
** Note: Same ZIP code.

Table 26

Juvenile Arrest Rates by County and Year, 1994-2003:
Arrests of Juveniles per 100,000 Total Population for Violent Crime*

Jurisdiction	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	+/- %
Prince George's Co.	90.11	88.41	78.73	75.86	78.26	73.29	65.38	57.82	51.86	51.15	-43.2%
Anne Arundel Co.	21.76	27.11	39.13	35.97	37.71	36.63	38.39	52.25	34.17	34.15	56.9%
Calvert Co.	51.57	68.37	38.96	62.05	48.78	78.65	116.68	61.76	59.33	39.23	-23.9%
Charles Co.	70.62	47.61	61.94	62.49	72.00	42.17	57.24	36.73	51.15	67.64	-4.2%
Howard Co.	32.36	49.35	60.72	47.61	26.80	22.21	31.47	41.11	18.45	19.30	-40.4%
Montgomery Co.	18.84	20.87	24.67	20.76	22.17	19.83	26.45	18.99	23.84	22.85	21.3%
Suburban Region	46.20	48.24	49.67	46.30	45.95	42.35	45.14	41.30	36.18	35.91	-22.3%
Maryland Statewide	71.43	72.20	79.37	73.36	61.13	59.65	62.38	61.49	57.42	59.07	-17.3%

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

Source: MSP 2004.

occur. As table 25 shows, juveniles commit murder in the suburban region so infrequently that it is almost a non-issue. Unfortunately, Prince George's County is one of the jurisdictions where, historically and today, it is an issue. That said, the usual caveat concerning tiny proportions is offered here: however high Prince George's County ranks compares to its neighbors on this indicator, the actual number of murders committed by juveniles in Prince George's County is so small that any statistics generated therefrom are highly unstable.

Per table 25, only three jurisdictions had any murders committed by juveniles at all in 2003 (most recent data available): Montgomery (0.44 per 100,000 total population), Prince George's (0.24 per 100,000) and Anne Arundel (0.20 per 100,000) counties. Prince George's County had the highest rate of decrease in murder committed by juveniles 1994-2003, 88.7 percent, followed by Anne Arundel (77.3 percent), Charles (53.9 percent), Montgomery (12.0 percent), Calvert (10.6 percent) and Howard (7.0 percent) counties (MSP 2004).

While figure 56 is offered for symmetry's sake, the reader is cautioned that it presents a

potentially misleading picture. Marlton and Forestville are pictured as having wildly different rates of murders by juveniles, but it must be strongly emphasized that each of these CDPs saw only one murder by a juvenile in the year in question; the differing rates are a result of the large disparity in population between the two CDPs. The main utility of this graph is to point out how few murders are committed by juveniles in the selected CDPs (PGCPD 2005).

4.C.3.3. Juvenile Violent Crime Arrests

The Maryland State Police define violent crime as aggravated assault, forcible rape, murder and robbery. This category of juvenile crime occupies an uneasy middle ground between property crime and homicide. One may be grateful to learn that juvenile violent-crime arrests are less frequent than those for property crime, and of course it seems obvious that there would be more violent crimes than homicides committed by juveniles. But the reader is cautioned against regarding violent crimes as simply occupying the "medium" position on the continuum between property crime and murder, for the offenses listed above can

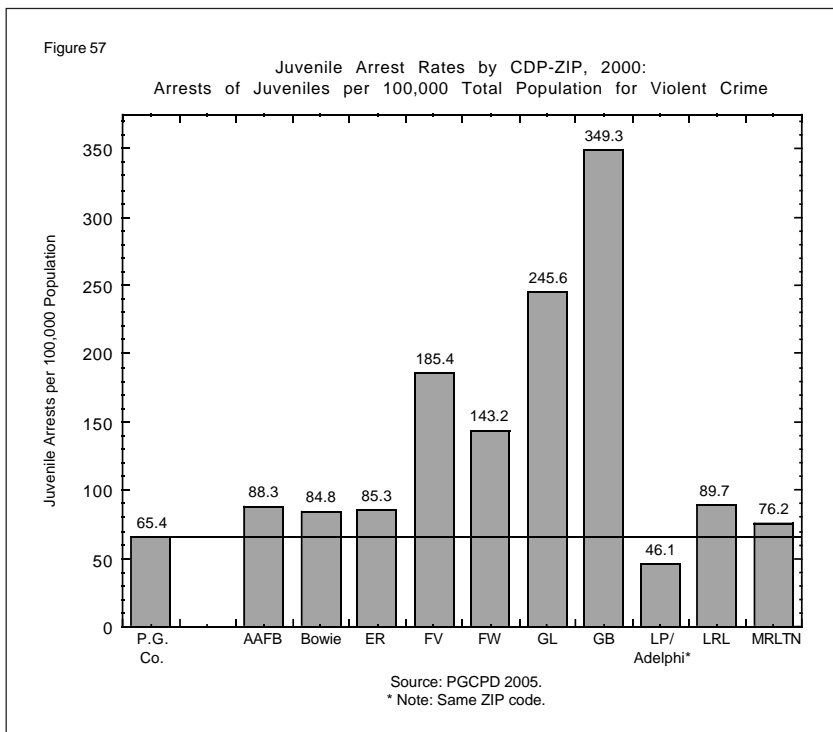
shatter bodies, minds, families and lives as easily as can homicide.

Therefore, it is with some concern that the LMB notes Prince George's County's relatively high standing among the suburban region jurisdictions where juvenile violent-crime arrests are concerned (see table 26), as of 2003 (the most recent data available). The jurisdiction with the highest rate of juvenile-crime arrests was Charles County, with 67.64 such arrests per 100,000 total population. Charles County was followed in descending

order by Prince George's (51.15 per 100,000), Calvert (39.23 per 100,000), Montgomery (22.85 per 100,000) and Howard (19.30 per 100,000) counties (MSP 2004).

Whatever concern the county's relatively high rate of juvenile violent-crime arrests raises, it is somewhat counterbalanced by the fact that the county led the suburban region in decreasing this rate during the years 1994-2003. The Prince George's County rate of decrease was 43.2 percent, followed by Howard (40.4 percent), Calvert (23.9 percent) and Charles (4.2 percent) counties. Montgomery County saw a 21.3 percent increase in juvenile arrests for violent crime during this period (MSP 2004).

Unlike the case of property crime, all but one of the selected CDPs had a juvenile violent-crime arrest rate higher than the countywide rate in 2000 (the most recent year for which population data were available), or 65.4 arrests of juveniles for property crime per 100,000 total population (figure 57). Greenbelt led the way with a rate of 349.3 arrests per 100,000, followed by Greater Landover (245.6 per 100,000), Forestville (185.4 per 100,000), Fort Washington (143.2 per 100,000), Laurel (89.7 per 100,000), Andrews Air Force Base



(88.3 per 100,000), East Riverdale (85.3 per 100,000), Bowie (84.8 per 100,000), Marlton (76.2 per 100,000), and Langley Park/Adelphi (46.1 per 100,000) (PGCPD 2005).

Chapter 5. Public Opinion Poll

The third 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 4, 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.

Consulting company InterGroup Services sub-contracted with Gonzales Research and Marketing Strategies, Inc. to conduct the poll. In consultation with LMB staff and with Gonzales Research and Marketing, questions were drafted by IGS. In addition to various demographic and screening questions, the survey contained 13 questions relating to the pre-selected 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 13. 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 both the amount of “venting” and 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 Research and Marketing conducted the poll between June 14 and June 22, 2005. All told, 402 households were successfully interviewed, giving a margin of error of plus or minus five percentage points for the entire sample. Basic criteria for inclusion in the poll were simple: a participating household had to reside in Prince George’s County and it had to have at least one child under 21 living at home. Of the 402 households, 54.2 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 and household status, the demographic breakdown of the respondents corresponded closely with known Prince George’s demographics, giving every reason to suppose that the sample was quite representative of the county. We found 47.0 percent of our respondents to be male, 53.0 percent female; we know from the Census Bureau that the county is 47.8 percent male and 52.2 percent female (BC 2001). Slightly more females reported using county services: 55.4 percent for females, 52.9 percent for men.

Our respondents were 30.8 percent white, 60.7 percent African-American and 6.7 percent other races, with 1.7 percent declining to respond. This was close to the county’s racial breakdown according to the census, though not identical. The census reports Prince George’s County to be 27.0 percent white, 62.7 percent African-American and 10.3 percent all other races (BC 2001). Our poll therefore slightly overstates white opinion and slightly understates black opinion. Because of their small numbers, just 27 people in all, results from respondents of other races have not been analyzed for the purposes of differentiating viewpoints by race. White respondents were slightly more likely than black ones to be users of county child-related services, 54.8 percent compared to 53.3 percent (and we have not analyzed the figure for the 27 “other race” respondents).

We found that 39.6 percent of respondents reported living within the I-95/495 beltway. Another 55.0 percent said they lived outside the beltway, and 5.5 percent either did not know or declined to answer. Respondents living outside the beltway were somewhat more likely to be users of county services for children than those living inside the beltway. Just over 55 percent of the outside-the-beltway group (55.2 percent) claimed to be service users, as against 51.6 percent on the inside-the-beltway residents.

Overall, our respondents were a reasonably affluent group, disproportionately so, indeed. In 2004, Prince George’s County’s median household income was \$66,750 (DOP 2005), meaning that half of the county’s households had incomes above that figure and half below it. Our survey data were gathered in a manner that does not allow 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: \$15,000 or less; \$15,001 to \$39,999; \$40,000 to 64,999; \$65,000

All told, 402 households were successfully interviewed, giving a margin of error of plus or minus five percentage points for the entire sample.

Table 27

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.	Teenage motherhood	↑ High ↓	7.32	3.0%
2.	Juvenile property crime		7.25	2.5%
3.	Juvenile violent crime		7.22	2.2%
4.	Juvenile deaths		7.13	1.7%
5.	Juvenile homicide		7.02	6.2%
6.	School suspensions		6.91	2.2%
7.	Chronic school absence		6.26	9.0%
8.	Readiness to learn	↑ Medium ↓	5.96	5.7%
9.	Child maltreatment		5.86	6.5%
10.	No prenatal care		5.64	10.4%
11.	Lack of early school experience		5.37	10.4%
12.	Low birth-weight babies	5.09	28.4%	
13.	Infant mortality	↑ Low ↓	4.29	30.3%

to \$89,999; and \$90,000 and above. (We rounded \$66,750 to \$65,000 for our mid-point and selected \$90,000 as the cutoff for the top income bracket to avoid making the second-highest bracket larger than the others.) Though we cannot know our respondents' median income, \$64,999 is obviously very close to the county median figure of \$66,750. Therefore, we would have expected to find about half of our respondents falling within the first three income ranges (zero to \$64,999) and about half in the top two ranges (\$65,000 and up).

In fact, 49.8 percent of respondents (200 households) reported household income above \$64,999, but only 33.1 percent (133 households) gave an income figure of under \$64,999. A sizable 17.2 percent declined to answer, and it is worth pointing out that, if this group were combined with the 33.1 percent of respondents who were in the lower half of the income ranges would neatly make up the difference and put almost exactly half of the respondents

on each side of the median. It would be unrealistic, however, to suppose that all 69 people refusing to answer were actually in the lower half of the income ranges, as there is actually good reason to expect a random phone survey to under-represent residents with the lowest incomes: 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. Whatever the possible explanations, the only conclusive statement that can be made is that the respondent pool seems slightly overpopulated with above-average earners.

Because the income bands toward the bottom of the selection of presented options had few respondents (only 13, in the case of the less-than-\$15,000 bracket, too few to be meaningful), we have for the purposes of this report

Table 28

Relative Importance of Indicators:
Public Opinion *versus* Statistical Analysis

Public Opinion	High ↑	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Juvenile property crime arrests • Teen deaths* • School suspensions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Juvenile violent crime arrests • Juvenile homicide arrests* 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teen motherhood • Chronic school absence
	Medium			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students not ready to learn • Child maltreatment • Late prenatal care • Prior school experience • Low birth-weight babies
	Low			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Infant mortality
		Low	Statistical Analysis	High

* Analysis pertaining to these indicators should only be made with caution, due to the small annual number of actual cases.

Note: Our methodology has been to assign a score on the vertical, public-opinion axis as follows. The telephone survey's issues with an aggregate score of 6.0 and above merited a "high" score; a score from 5.0 to 5.9, a "medium" score; and a score below 5.0, a "low" score.

As for the horizontal, statistical-analysis axis, scores have been assigned in this manner. An issue merited a "high" score if it exhibited any two of the following three characteristics: (a) least favorable or second-least favorable rank against the comparable jurisdictions for the latest year for which data were available; (b) unfavorable trend data, regardless of standing among neighboring counties; or (c) favorable trend data, but less favorable than the trends for the remainder of the metro area. An issue merited a "medium" score if it exhibited one of these characteristics. It merited a "low" score if it showed none of these characteristics.

collapsed the five brackets into two: (a) zero to \$64,999, which we term "lower-end earners" (the lower three bands); and (b) \$65,000 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: 57.1 percent as opposed to 52.5 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: 71.9 percent reported being part of a two-parent household; 19.4 said they were single parents; and 8.5 percent reported some "other," unspecified arrangement. This is the demographic sub-grouping that corresponds least well with what we know from the Census Bureau. For 2000, the census reported that there were

101,251 households in the county with children under 18 at home. Of these, 61,398 or 60.6 percent were two-parent families with natural children present (not adoptees or foster children). And 32,410 or 32.0 percent were households headed by a sole female with natural children (BC 2001). 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 inflates the views of dual-parent families and under-weighs those of single-parent households, a fact which the reader should be cognizant of.

The reason for asking about household status 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 not borne out for, in fact, it was two-parent households that were slightly more likely to be users of county child-related services: 55.0 percent versus 53.8 percent.

For each question, respondents were asked to score the indicator's importance from 1 to 10, with 1 meaning "virtually no problem" and 10 meaning "a very big 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 27. The first thing to note is that all issues but one (infant mortality) were, overall, of more than "moderate concern," the term Gonzales Research and Marketing used to describe a score of 5. More than 10 percent of respondents described all of the issues save infant

mortality as being a "very big problem" meriting a score of 10. More than 25 percent of the respondents felt that the top four issues were "a very big problem."

In table 28, the "public importance" of each issue is cross-tabulated 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 would show the issues where the public's level of concern was largely in accordance with our statistical analysis, although as it happens the only overlap is in the upper right-hand corner.

We do not claim this tabulation to have been a perfectly scientific exercise. As far as the public importance of an issue was concerned, any issue scoring 6 or above was labeled as being of "high" importance; any scoring 5 to 5.9, of "medium" importance; and any scoring below 5, of "low" importance. As for our assigning of statistical importance, an issue merited a "high" score if it exhibited any two of the following three characteristics: (a) least favorable or second-least favorable rank on the intercounty comparison analyses; (b) unfavorable trend data, regardless of standing among neighboring counties; or (c) favorable trend data, but less favorable than the trends for the overall metro area. An issue merited a "medium" score if it exhibited one of these characteristics. It merited a "low" score if it showed none of these characteristics. This method seemed the most neutral way of assigning statistical importance, though we concede it is not perfect. Using this method, an issue far out of line as compared to metro and state

Table 29

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. Infant mortality	22.0	17.2	23.3	16.5	18.0	19.4	19.6	18.8	17.0	23.1
2. Low birth-weight babies	30.8	29.0	35.3	29.0	28.6	30.6	30.7	28.6	29.3	34.6
3. No prenatal care	49.1	43.9	50.4	45.5	49.6	42.7	46.6	46.5	44.6	51.3
4. Teenage motherhood	76.7	67.4	75.9	59.0	73.4	71.0	69.8	72.8	37.0	70.5
5. Readiness to learn	51.6	52.0	51.1	57.5	52.5	57.3	54.0	49.3	57.4	46.2
6. Lack of early school experience	34.6	30.8	42.1	39.5	45.5	35.5	35.4	43.7	37.7	55.1
7. School suspensions	67.9	61.1	62.4	64.0	68.0	66.1	65.1	68.5	72.7	46.2
8. Chronic school absence	51.6	58.4	51.9	48.5	52.9	59.7	58.7	52.6	57.1	52.6
9. Child maltreatment	53.5	51.6	52.6	53.5	52.9	50.8	48.7	55.9	49.8	59.0
10. Juvenile deaths	68.6	70.1	72.2	68.5	66.4	75.8	70.9	68.5	70.2	69.2
11. Juvenile property crime	74.8	71.9	75.9	72.0	75.0	71.8	72.0	74.2	73.0	75.6
12. Juvenile violent crime	73.0	71.9	74.4	72.5	74.6	69.4	69.3	74.6	73.7	69.2
13. Juvenile homicide	64.8	67.4	67.7	69.0	63.9	71.8	67.2	65.3	68.9	57.7

data on one measure ("county snapshot" or trend) would get a "medium" score, while an issue slightly out of step on two measures would get a "high" score. Nonetheless, there seemed no other way of 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, 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 9 in importance, only three inside-the-beltway residents gave the issue of prenatal care a 2 and so forth. From such small numbers, of course, one may deduce nothing.) Collapsing the brackets gave workable numbers of respondents for each issue. Using these collapsed brackets, table 29 summarizes the responses to all questions.

5.A. Result 1: Babies Born Healthy

We asked respondents a question relating to each of the four indicators pertaining to the “babies born healthy” result. We knew from our statistical analysis that each was a concern, at least numerically speaking. Apparently, the issues of low birth-weight babies, teen motherhood and mothers not receiving prenatal care (but not the issue of infant mortality) are of some concern to the general public (in that all three merited scores of 5 or higher on the scale of 1 to 10 initially used by the polling firm), although less so than virtually every other topic that the survey covered.

5.A.1. Infant Mortality

Statement: 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 Prince George’s 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. To be clear, if you say “1” you are saying that the county does not have a big problem with the issue, and if you say “10” you are saying that the county has a very big problem.

Question: The first issue 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 Prince George’s 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 13 issues they were asked about. Garnering an overall concern score of only 4.29 out of a possible 10, infant mortality was only deemed “a very big problem” problem by 16 people (4.0 percent). By contrast, 47 people considered it to be “no problem” at all (11.7 percent). The largest differences in viewpoint among demographic

subgroups were by residence and income.

Thus, 47.2 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 higher 52.9 percent of beltway-outsiders. Attaching “reasonable importance” to the issue — that is, attaching scores of 6 through 10 — were 22.0 percent of beltway-insiders and 17.2 percent of beltway-outsiders. About 30 percent of insiders and outsiders said they did not know or would not answer (30.8 percent, insiders; 29.9 percent, outsiders). In short, while this issue is apparently of no great concern to any Prince George’s Countians, it is of particularly little interest to those outside the beltway.

At this juncture, a word is in order about the high “don’t know” response rate for this question (see table 27). 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, 30.3 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, 51.8 percent rated the issue as being of limited importance, next to 19.6 percent assigning reasonable importance to the issue. Women were slightly less inclined to dismiss infant mortality as being of limited importance (49.3 percent), but, there again, they were also less likely to assign reasonable importance to it (18.8 percent). The discrepancy is explained by the fact that the female respondents were more likely to say they did not have an answer (31.9 percent to 28.6 percent).

As for household structure, single parents were more likely to attribute reasonable importance to the issue (23.1 percent) than

were non-single, or “dual,” parents (17.0 percent). On the other hand, over half of each group dismissed the issue as being of limited importance (50.5 percent, two-parent households; 53.8 percent, one-parent households). The difference is explained by the fact of the two-parent households’ far higher DK rate: 32.5 percent as against 23.1 percent.

We found income to have some influence on respondents’ answers. By and large, lower-end earners were more concerned about infant mortality than upper-end ones, though neither lost any sleep over the issue. Just under one quarter (23.3 percent) of lower-end earners assigned reasonable importance to the issue, as opposed to 16.5 percent of upper-end earners. Close to half of both upper- and lower-end earners dismissed the issue as being of limited importance (49.0 percent, upper; 48.9 percent, lower).

There was not much cleavage along racial lines. A similar 18.0 percent (blacks) and 19.4 percent (whites) attributed reasonable importance to infant mortality, hardly evidence of overwhelming concern. Also similar were the proportions of black and white respondents giving the issue a 1-5 “limited importance” score (50.4 percent, black; 51.6 percent, white). This is particularly interesting because the infant mortality rate in the African-American community is about twice that among whites (OMH 2005).

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 Prince George’s County?

The responses relating to low birth weights among Prince George’s County newborns displayed many of the same characteristics seen in responses to the question about infant mortality. For a start, a high proportion of respondents — 28.4 percent — gave no answer to this question, perhaps because of its technical-

sounding subject matter. And overall this issue, which statistical analysis found to be of high concern, only barely resonated with the public. Scoring 5.09 out of 10, this was the public’s second-least important issue. Only 26 people in total considered this to be a “very big problem.” The other response patterns for this question were also similar to the patterns for the infant mortality question.

As with infant mortality, a roughly equivalent proportion of beltway-insiders and -outsiders considered this issue to be of reasonable importance. Exactly 29 percent of outsiders called this issue reasonably important, and 30.8 percent of inside-the-beltway residents did. It is interesting, then, that more beltway-outsiders defined the issue as being of limited importance: 45.2 percent of outsiders and 38.4 percent of insiders (the disproportion being explained by the difference in DK rate).

Lower-end earners were also somewhat more likely than upper-end earners to attach some importance to this issue: 35.3 percent versus 29.0 percent. Lower-end earners were about as likely to dismiss the LBW-baby issue as being of limited importance as higher-end earners were; they were, however, less likely to answer the question with a “don’t know.” While 41.0 percent of better-off earners wrote LBW babies off as being of limited concern and while 30.0 percent gave no answer, among lower-end earners the corresponding figures were 40.6 percent and 24.1 percent, respectively.

As with infant mortality, the analysis by race did not find a large cleavage in viewpoint. African-American respondents were slightly less likely than white ones to exhibit concern: 28.6 percent of black households thought LBW babies to be of reasonable importance, compared with 30.6 percent of white households. As with infant mortality, about two fifths of both black and white respondents attached only limited importance to the issue: 41.1 percent of blacks and 42.0 percent of whites. As was the case with infant mortality, this relative equality of opinion exists on an issue that affects the African-American community

nationwide to a significantly greater degree than it affects whites (Fang et al. 1996).

The demographic division by gender also did not present much difference in opinion. For men, 30.7 percent considered this issue to be of reasonable importance. Slightly fewer women did so, only 28.6 percent. Just over two fifths of both men (43.4 percent) and women (40.9 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 29.3 percent, with 38.9 percent exhibiting only limited concern. Among single parents, more than a third (34.6 percent) were reasonably concerned, but with exactly half confessing to limited concern. This is another instance of a sub-group at increased risk showing a contradictory lack of increased concern: single motherhood correlates with an increased incidence of low birth-weight babies (Moore 1995).

5.A.3. Prenatal Care

Question: The next issue is expectant mothers not getting into prenatal care when pregnant. On a scale of 1 to 10, how big a problem is access to prenatal care in Prince George's County?

Access to prenatal care was low on respondents' list of concerns, meriting a score of only 5.64 and ranking tenth out of the 13 issues. Statistically, this indicator performed poorly enough to earn a designation of high concern; yet, fewer than half of respondents (46.5 percent) considered access to prenatal care to be a reasonable concern. This was almost identical to the proportion of beltway-outsiders (45.7 percent) and a good bit more than the proportion of beltway-insiders (40.8 percent) who agreed. There was a similarly sized discrepancy when the figures were broken down by income: 50.4 percent of lower-end earners were reasonably concerned, as were 45.5 percent of upper-end earners. The upper-income

group was somewhat more likely not to have an opinion: 13.5 percent as against 9.0 percent. Almost identical proportions of upper- and lower-end earners expressed only limited concern (41.0 percent, upper; 40.6 percent, lower).

Women and men were also almost equally likely to express an interest in this issue. Just over 46 percent of each called themselves reasonably concerned (46.5 percent, women; 46.6 percent, men).

The racial cleavage was the greatest of the demographic divides for this question. African-American respondents were noticeably more likely to offer a positive response to this question. While 42.7 percent of white respondents appeared reasonably concerned by county prenatal care access, 49.6 percent of black respondents were this concerned. Naturally, then, 47.6 percent of whites professed to have only limited concern, next to just 40.2 percent of blacks. This somewhat heightened concern among blacks makes sense, given that the percentage of African-American mothers receiving early prenatal care in Maryland has remained consistently and substantially lower than the percentage of both white Maryland mothers and all Maryland mothers receiving early prenatal care (AEC 2001).

Another relatively large cleavage was along the household status line. Single parents were notably more likely to show reasonable concern for county prenatal care access than were dual parents. Dual parents were concerned to the tune of about 44.6 percent, compared to the 51.3 percent of single parents who were thus concerned. The DK rate was similar for both groups: 10.7 percent for dual parents and 9.0 percent for single parents. Just under two fifths of single parents had only limited concern (39.7 percent) versus 44.7 percent of dual parents. Again, this disparity makes sense in light of the fact that single mothers nationwide tend to get less and/or later prenatal care than married mothers (Moore 1995).

5.B. Result 2: Children Successful in School

In chapter 4, we mentioned the difficulty of selecting indicators to measure children's success in school. One alleged predictor of school success, a new kindergartner's "readiness to learn," is currently directly measured only by the Work Sampling System (WSS). WSS is relatively new to Maryland and has a technical-sounding name which we worried might intimidate some respondents. Therefore we did not mention WSS by name, though we did ask respondents how big a problem they thought child school readiness is in Prince George's County. The only other question we asked regarding children's success in school was about early school experience.

5.B.1. Students Not Ready to Learn (WSS)

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 Prince George's County?

As stated above, 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. Relatively speaking, respondents were not particularly troubled by county youngsters' readiness to learn, in contrast to the fact that WSS results in Prince George's County are statistically of high concern. Learning readiness ranked eighth out of 13 issues as far as the public was concerned. There were no particularly large opinion cleavages for this indicator, other than by income and family type. The rest of the differences in opinion among other demographic subgroupings barely exceeded the poll's margin of error.

Slightly more than half of both beltway-insiders (51.5 percent) and -outsiders (52.0 percent) considered learning readiness to be a reason-

able concern. The discrepancies when the figures were broken down by income were notably larger: 51.1 percent of lower-end earners were reasonably concerned, as against 57.5 percent of upper-end earners (this 6.4-point gap is greater than the margin of error). The lower-income group was a good deal more likely not to have an opinion: 10.5 percent as against 4.0 percent. The proportion of lower- and upper-end earners expressing only limited concern were nearly identical: 38.4 percent and 38.5 percent, respectively. These figures are counter-intuitive, as one might have assumed wealthier respondents to be better positioned to get their children into the sorts of early-education programs designed to improve school readiness. Also, the fact that upper-end earners were the more concerned is interesting in itself. On only 4 of 13 indicators were the wealthier respondents more concerned than the less financially stable (the other three issues were violence-related suspensions, child maltreatment and juvenile homicide).

Men were rather more likely than women to express an interest in this issue. More than half called themselves reasonably concerned (54.0 percent); among women, the figure was only 49.3 percent.

The racial cleavage was greater than the gender cleavage. White respondents were more likely to offer a positive response to this question. While 52.5 percent of African-American respondents were reasonably concerned by county children's learning readiness, 57.3 percent of white respondents were this concerned. Also, 41.4 percent of blacks professed to have only limited concern, next to just 37.1 percent of whites.

The greatest cleavage of all was along the household status line. Dual parents were more likely to show reasonable concern for children's learning readiness than were single parents (57.4 percent and 46.2 percent, respectively). The DK rate was higher for single parents: 7.7 percent for single parents and 4.8 percent for dual parents. Just over one third of

dual parents had only limited concern (37.8 percent) versus the somewhat higher 46.1 percent of single parents. Again, these were not the expected figures. Inasmuch as single parenthood is closely associated with poverty, so dual parenthood is associated, at least relatively speaking, with being better off financially. In turn, one would expect the better-off to be less concerned about this issue than the poor. One possible explanation may simply be lower expectations on the part of those at the lower end of the income scale.

5.B.2. Early School Experience

Question: The next issue is that not all children attend kindergarten, and may be less prepared to succeed in school than children who have. On a scale of 1 to 10, how big a problem is the lack of kindergarten participation in Prince George's County?

Interestingly, respondents did not seem to associate early school attendance with increased "readiness to learn," as this question 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: 5.37 out of 10, ranking the issue eleventh out of 13 indicators. In contrast, our statistical analysis found this issue to be of high concern.

While beltway-outsiders were slightly more concerned about readiness to learn as measured in the previous question than were beltway-insiders (52.0 percent to 51.6 percent), the reverse held true on this question. In this case, only 30.8 percent of outsiders considered county children's early school experience, or the lack thereof, to be of reasonable concern, compared to 34.6 percent of insiders. Both types of resident were about as likely to give a DK answer: 10.1 percent for insiders and 11.3 percent for outsiders. Among insiders, 55.3 percent expressed limited concern; among outsiders, 57.9 percent.

Lower-end earners were somewhat more likely to be reasonably concerned about early

school experience than upper-end earners: 42.1 percent were reasonably concerned, compared with 39.5 percent of upper-end earners. Close to half of both groups showed only limited concern for this issue (48.9 percent, lower-end earners; 46.5 percent, upper-end earners). Upper-end earners were almost twice as likely not to answer: 14.0 percent as to 9.0 percent.

Black respondents were more likely than white ones to express some concern about lack of early school experience: getting on for half of them (45.5 percent), as opposed to a little over a third of whites (35.5 percent). Just under half of both African-Americans and whites showed only limited concern (47.9 and 44.3 percent, respectively). This racial division represented the second-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. About one third of men expressed reasonable concern about lack of early school experience (35.4 percent). Among women, the response was a higher 43.7 percent. More men than women did not have an opinion, 13.2 percent as against 8.0 percent. More than half of men (51.4 percent) showed only limited concern, compared to 48.3 percent of females.

Like the previous question, this one revealed its largest cleavage by household status. While the level of concern among dual-parent households was lukewarm at best (a mere 37.7 percent considered this of reasonable importance), a good deal more than half of all single households (55.1 percent) expressed a high level of concern. Interestingly, this was not because of a dramatic difference in the proportions of the respective groupings expressing that this issue is a "very big problem" and giving it a score of 10, as was the case on some other questions. In fact, there was not much disparity there at all: 7.7 percent of single parents gave this issue a 10, as compared to 5.9 percent of dual parents. Instead, the disparity along household status lines was simply because a particularly large number of single

parents (17, or 21.8 percent) gave this issue a 6, compared with only 6.2 percent of dual parents.

5.B.3. Violence-related Suspensions

Question: The next issue is student disruptiveness and violent behavior. If school suspensions are the measure of student disruptiveness, on a scale of 1 to 10, how big a problem are student suspensions in Prince George's County?

Student suspensions placed fairly high in the public's mind, with a score of 6.91 out of 10 and a rank of sixth out of 13 indicators. It ranked considerably lower in the LMB's mind, however, since statistical analysis showed the county's rate of violence-related suspensions to be comparatively low. This issue was extremely divisive, in terms of responses, by household status, but the cleavages in the other sub-groupings were relatively small.

Neither income nor race made much difference to a person's response. Close to two thirds of both upper- and lower-end earners thought this a reasonable concern, 64.0 percent of upper-end earners and 62.4 percent of lower-end earners. As for race, on this issue, blacks were slightly more concerned than whites, but not by much: 68.0 percent of African-Americans thought this issue reasonably worrying, as did 66.1 percent of whites.

Women were just a little more concerned about student suspensions than men. While 65.1 percent of male respondents said they were reasonably concerned about this, 68.5 percent of women did so. Similar proportions of men and women thought this to be of only limited importance (about 25 percent in each case), but men were more likely than women not to know: 9.0 percent, compared to 5.2 percent.

Viewpoints by residence showed more difference, with inside-beltway residents expressing more concern about suspensions than outsiders. While only 61.1 percent of beltway outsiders thought this issue to be reasonably

troubling, 67.9 percent of beltway insiders thought this to be the case. In fact, 24.5 percent of beltway insiders gave this issue a maximum-concern 10 score, as against 15.4 percent of beltway outsiders.

The greatest cleavage was by household status. Among single parents, 46.2 percent were reasonably concerned about school suspensions. Among dual parents, the rate was drastically higher: 72.7 percent. Not surprisingly, dual parents were much less likely to say that school suspensions were of little importance: 21.1 percent, compared to 43.5 percent of single parents. Single parents were considerably more likely to say they didn't know (10.3 percent, single; 6.2 percent, dual). This disparity is most surprising, considering the fact that children from single-parent homes are at increased risk of misbehaving at school (Nelson et al. 2001).

5.B.4. Chronic School Absence

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 Prince George's County?

The issue of chronic absenteeism — that is, students absent 20 or more days a year from school — is related to that of student suspensions. Certainly, we considered both to be measures of schools' conduciveness to learning, and we found that county performance on this indicator could be improved: statistically, chronic school absence is of high concern. This issue ranked low in the public's hierarchy of issues, as did its sister issue, suspensions. Scoring 6.26 out of 10, chronic school absence ranked ninth of 13 indicators. There were no particularly strong differences of opinion on this issue between any of the demographic subgroups.

Geographic location and race made the largest difference to a person's answer about chronic absenteeism. Fifty-one percent of beltway-insiders and 58.4 percent of beltway-outsiders

were reasonably concerned about absenteeism. The proportions of whites and blacks expressing reasonable concern looked quite similar: 52.9 percent of blacks and 59.7 percent of whites, though clearly the issue was somewhat more important to whites.

In contrast to suspensions, men were more concerned about absenteeism than women, though neither set of respondents was as concerned as it had been about suspensions. Among women, 52.6 percent were reasonably concerned about absenteeism; among men, 58.7 percent.

Income-wise, upper-end earners expressed considerably less concern for absenteeism than they had for suspensions: about 48 percent were reasonably concerned, in this case. And while 62.4 percent of lower-end earners had been reasonably concerned about suspensions, only 51.9 percent of them were similarly concerned about chronic absenteeism. Also, only 12.0 percent of lower-end earners called absenteeism a “very big problem,” compared to 16.0 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: 59.7 percent reasonably concerned about absenteeism, against 66.1 percent for suspensions. But black concern was even more diminished, compared to the disquiet expressed over suspensions. While 68.0 percent of African-American respondents had been reasonably concerned about suspensions, only 52.9 percent were as concerned about absenteeism. In fact, more blacks expressed only limited concern about absenteeism than whites: 38.1 percent to 30.6 percent. Whites were just as likely not to give an answer as blacks were: 9.0 percent to 9.7 percent, respectively. This relatively diminished interest among African-Americans is counter-intuitive since black students are much more likely to leave school before graduating than are whites and since chronic absence seems likely to indicate a level of disconnect that could well lead to dropping out (CTDB 2005a). Are black

Prince George’s County residents simply accustomed to students’ missing a large number of school days? If so, their lowered expectations may account for some of the racial disparity in opinion recorded in response to our question about chronic school absence.

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

Under this result, the LMB considered not only indicators of direct harm coming to young people in Prince George’s County (e.g., teen deaths and child maltreatment), but ways in which young people pose a threat to each other and to the larger community (e.g., as criminal perpetrators). The young people arrested for the crimes mentioned at the end of this section not only menace their neighbors — they are engaged in activities that make it very unlikely that they will achieve much success later in life, or grow into anything other than a burden on and cost to society. Nonetheless, our statistical analysis found that juvenile crime rates in Prince George’s County were not highly dissimilar to those of its neighbors (juvenile violent crime and homicide arrests were of medium statistical importance, while juvenile property-crime arrests were of low statistical importance), suggesting that, while many issues related to young people in this county call for urgent attention, crime-prevention may not need to be the first priority.

5.C.1. Teen Deaths

Question: The next issue is the accidental or violent death of teenagers, for example, in auto wrecks or from homicide. On a scale of 1 to 10, how big a problem is the death rate of teenagers in Prince George’s County?

In chapter 4, we discussed only violent juvenile deaths. As noted in chapter 4, there are in fact very few homicides of teenagers in Prince George’s County, just a handful annually, and certainly too small a number from which to generalize. For this reason, we asked the public about both purposeful and accidental deaths of teenagers in this question.

Though teen deaths were of low statistical importance according to our analysis in chapter four, the issue of deaths among county teenagers was of relatively high concern to the public. It ranked fourth of 13 in the hierarchy of issues, with a score of 7.13 out of 10. Over two thirds of each demographic subgroup thought it to be of reasonable concern. The only significant cleavage was by race.

Men and women, rich and poor — all were almost equally concerned about teen deaths. In each case, just over two thirds of respondents considered the issue to be of reasonable concern. Among lower-end earners, 72.2 percent thought it a reasonable concern; among upper-end earners, 68.5 percent. For men, 70.9 percent registered reasonable concern, as did 68.5 percent of women.

There was also no real difference of opinion between inside-the-beltway and outside-the-beltway residents, with the outsiders being slightly more concerned about teen deaths than insiders: 70.1 percent of outsiders thought this a reasonable concern, next to 68.6 percent of insiders.

Dual parents were more concerned than single parents, by a factor of 70.2 percent reasonably concerned to 69.2 percent, though the difference is too small to be worth analyzing.

Finally, whites were notably more concerned about teen deaths than blacks. Just under two thirds of blacks thought this a reasonable problem (66.4 percent), while just over three quarters of whites were similarly concerned (75.8 percent). But 28.7 percent of blacks called this a “very big problem,” compared to only 22.6 percent of whites. It is African-American youth who face the largest risk of dying young. To take the risk of dying by homicide as an example, “[i]n 2002, the homicide rate for black male teens was 53.3 per 100,000, nearly 14 times higher than the rate (3.9 per 100,000) for white non-Hispanic males,” while the rate for black female teens (8 per 100,000) was exactly 5 times that for white female teens (CTDB 2005b).

5.C.2. Child Abuse and Neglect

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 Prince George’s County?

Scoring 5.86 out of 10, this issue ranked ninth of 13 indicators, a slightly higher ranking than our statistical analysis — which found the issue to be of medium importance — might have led us to expect. The greatest issue cleavages were by gender and household status.

Inside-the-beltway residents were slightly more concerned about child maltreatment than were beltway-outsiders. Beltway-outsiders thought this a concern of reasonable magnitude to the tune of 51.6 percent. Beltway-insiders were a little more concerned: 53.5 percent of them thought child maltreatment to be reasonably problematic. Indeed, 12.6 percent of beltway-insiders thought this to be a 10-scoring “very big problem,” compared to only 5.0 percent of outsiders.

The response breakdown by household status showed the largest cleavage. For child maltreatment, 59.0 percent of single parents considered this reasonably problematic, compared to only 49.8 percent of dual parents. Perhaps it is the case that the relative prevalence of unstable relationships among single parents is at least in part the cause of their concern. Dual parents were more likely not to respond than were single parents (7.3 and 3.8 percent, respectively).

The subgrouping of gender showed the second-biggest division in opinion, with women notably more concerned about child maltreatment than were men. Women considered child maltreatment to be reasonably problematic in 55.9 percent of cases, next to 48.7 percent of men. Not surprisingly, then, more men thought the issue to be of limited importance (45.5 percent, men; 37.1 percent, women). Women were a little more likely to say they did not know than men (7.0 percent to 5.8 percent).

Race showed the next most significant cleavage, but not much of one. An essentially similar 50.8 percent of whites and 52.9 percent of African-Americans thought child maltreatment to be of reasonable concern. The proportions of blacks and whites giving the issue a 10-point, “very big problem” rating were similar as well: 8.2 percent and 7.3 percent, respectively.

The cleavage by income was the smallest: only 53.5 percent of upper-end earners expressed reasonable concern about child maltreatment, while 52.6 percent of lower-end earners did so. Just over one third of upper-end earners thought the issue to be of only limited concern (38.5 percent), compared to about two fifths of lower-end earners (42.1 percent).

5.C.3. Juvenile Arrests

Our statistical analysis did not find particularly pressing problems in any of the categories of juvenile arrests discussed below: juvenile homicide arrests, juvenile property-crime arrests and juvenile violent-crime arrests. This is not to say that the county can afford to be complacent on the subject, but rather to point out that — as attention-grabbing as crimes committed by young people are — the county’s rates of juvenile arrests in all three categories are in line with those of its neighbors. Juvenile violent crime and juvenile homicides are the most worrisome, statistically speaking, though in neither case does the county have the highest rate of such crimes in the area. On the indicator of juvenile property crime, the county in fact has the second-lowest rate in the Washington suburban region.

5.C.3.1. Juvenile Homicide Arrests

Question: The next issue is the amount of homicide committed by teenagers. On a scale of 1 to 10, how big a problem is homicide committed by teenagers in Prince George’s County?

Our statistical analysis did not find juvenile homicide to be a particularly pressing problem in Prince George’s County. Perhaps not sur-

prisingly, however, given the sensational nature of any such crime committed by a young person, respondents considered this issue to be a relatively important one. However, while high homicide rates in general continue to plague some parts of the county, there would be little sense in positioning significant resources to specifically target the truly tiny number of homicides committed by juveniles each year.

Those subgroups that might be associated with higher incomes tended to be more concerned about this issue than others. Beltway outsiders thought homicides committed by juveniles somewhat more of a problem than did insiders: 67.4 percent, as compared with 64.8 percent of beltway insiders. Upper-end earners were a little more likely than lower-end earners to express concern: 69.0 percent versus 67.7 percent. Males exceeded females: 67.2 percent of men and 65.3 percent of women had reasonable concern.

Such demographic division as there was was to be found along the household-status and race faults. In what was the second-largest cleavage on this question, whites showed greater concern than blacks: 71.8 percent of whites and 63.9 percent of blacks thought juvenile homicides were of reasonable importance. As for household type, 68.9 percent of dual parents expressed concern, compared to 57.7 percent of single parents. Though this sort of result — higher concern among some subgroupings who are less likely to be victimized — may seem surprising, the explanation may lie in an increased feeling of vulnerability on the part of those who might be considered the “haves,” who may worry that they are targeted by the “have-nots.”

5.C.3.2. Juvenile Violent Crime Arrests

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 Prince George’s County?

Our statistical analysis found teenage violent crime to be of moderate importance in Prince George's County, though the public believes it to be of high importance. This issue ranked third out of the 13 indicators, with a score of 7.22. To the rather small degree that there was any opinion cleavage, it was by gender and race.

Violent crime is often supposed to be an urban phenomenon, but place of residence had little effect on respondent attitudes. Close to three quarters (71.9 percent) of beltway-outsiders thought of teen violent crime as being a reasonable concern, as did a similar 73.0 percent of beltway insiders. Outsiders were also more likely not to volunteer an answer: 3.2 percent, next to 1.3 percent.

The largest division of opinion was by gender. Women were more concerned about violent crime than men, perhaps since rape is a component of violent crime. While 69.3 percent of male respondents proved reasonably concerned about teen violent crime, a higher 74.6 percent of females did. Men were more likely than women not to answer: 3.2 percent versus 1.4 percent.

There was some difference of opinion between single and dual parents. The better part of three quarters of each were reasonably worried about teen violent crime: 73.7 percent of dual parents and 69.2 percent of single parents.

Lower-end earners were a little more worried about violent crime than upper-end earners, with 74.4 percent of them expressing reasonable worry, as opposed to 72.5 percent of upper-end earners. Despite this overall similarity in view, 27.0 percent of upper-end earners considered teen violent crime a "very big problem," compared to only 21.8 percent of lower-end earners.

African-Americans were more worried about violent crime than whites: 74.6 percent of them said they were reasonably concerned, while only 69.4 percent of whites did so. This

should not surprise us, as African-Americans make up the overwhelming majority of victims of violent crime. Comprising as they do a little over a quarter of the state's 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 in Maryland (MSP 2000).

5.C.3.3. Juvenile Property Crime Arrests

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 Prince George's County?

As large as violent crime loomed in respondents' minds, property crime was even more of a concern, something of a surprise considering that our statistical analysis found the county's performance on this indicator to be of only low importance. With a score of 7.25 out of 10, this issue ranked second in the public's mind with almost negligible differences in opinion among the various subgroups.

Perhaps reflecting the perception that crime in general, including property crime, is predominantly an urban issue, inside-the-beltway respondents were slightly more likely to be reasonably worried about property crime than beltway outsiders: 74.8 percent as against 71.9 percent. Insiders were also a little more emphatic in their views: only 1.9 percent declined to answer, compared to 2.7 percent of outsiders.

There was no serious division of opinion by sex. Just under three quarters of men and women were reasonably concerned about property crime (72.0 percent of the former and 74.2 percent of the latter).

Dual parents were a bit less concerned about property crime than single parents, 73.0 percent compared to 75.6 percent. This finding surprised us: single parents tend to have lower income than dual parents and, as we shall see,

Table 30

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

Rank	Issue and Description	Number of Respondents Giving this Answer
1.	Increased school funding	31
2.	Drug and alcohol abuse	17
3.	Not enough after-school programs and activities	14
4.	Quality of schools compared to others in Maryland	9
5.	Day care access and cost	8
6.	Gangs and gang violence	8
7.	Counseling for children	7
8.	Homelessness	6
9.	Mentor programs	5
10.	More/better birth control information and other sex education issues	4
11.	Availability of health care	3
12.	Lack of summer employment opportunities	3
13.	Police harassing and/or "profiling" youth	2
14.	Pollution and air quality	2
15.	Peer pressure	2
16.	Abortion	1
17.	Not enough parks and recreation areas	1

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.

Race had the second-largest effect on the opinions expressed. Just under three quarters of whites saw property crime as being of reasonable concern (71.8 percent). More African-Americans thought this, however: 75.0 percent. But blacks were more likely to think of property crime as only being a limited concern (24.6 percent), as compared to 21.7 percent of whites. This disparity — which is approximately the same size as the disparity between blacks (0.4 percent) and whites (6.5 percent) who selected "don't know" — was expected since, in fact, blacks are disproportionately the victims of property crime in Maryland, comprising only around a quarter of the state's population but making up 52 percent of break-

ing/entering victims, 53 percent of larceny/theft victims and 72 percent of auto-theft victims in Maryland (MSP 2000).

The largest opinion divergence was by income. Among upper-end earners, 72.0 percent found teen property crime to be a reasonable concern. Among lower-end earners, however, the figure was 75.9 percent. Only about one fifth of lower-end earners dismissed property crime as being of limited concern (21.8 percent), while exactly one quarter of upper-end earners did so.

5.D. Open-ended Question

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

As mentioned earlier, we decided against allowing respondents to volunteer a series of issues that concerned them. We were con-

cerned 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.

The responses to this question were thought-provoking. For one thing, more than a quarter of respondents opted to suggest an issue (123 out of 402). Second, contrary to expectations, most of these responses pertained to issues well within the scope of county officials’ responsibilities, suggesting a high level of realistic engagement on the part of these 123 respondents with the issues facing their communities.

The 123 respondents’ volunteered answers are shown in table 30. A plurality of responses had to do with school-related concerns: 31 expressed concern that the public schools are under-funded, while another 4 told of their desire for changes to the sex education curricula in use in the county. The second most popular topic was drug and alcohol abuse (17 responses) while the third most popular topic was “not enough after-school programs and activities” (14).

While the rest of the topics’ supporters numbered in the single digits, it is possible to discern a pattern tying a number of the responses to this question together. A total of 41 respondents (around 10 percent of the total respondents to the survey as a whole and fully one third of those who chose to offer responses to this question) expressed concerns that could be described as relating to the problem of children not having enough access to positive experiences and good adult role models: “not enough after-school programs/activities” (14); the problem of gangs/gang violence (8); too little counseling available for children (7); too few mentor programs for young people (5); lack of youth summer employment opportuni-

ties (3); police harassment and profiling of juveniles (2); and negative peer pressure experienced by young people (2).

This cohesion among the spontaneously-offered responses suggests that a good number of Prince George’s County residents would be pleased to see programs that offer support and positive, formative experiences to young people — programs that might also help address some of the statistically problematic indicators discussed in chapter 4 of this report (high rates of chronic school absence, teenage motherhood and juvenile crime arrests, for example).

Chapter 6. Focus Groups

On behalf of the LMB, consulting company IGS also conducted three focus groups, (a) one with teens, focusing on school absence and violence, (b) one with Hispanic mothers, focusing on school readiness and (c) one with African-American mothers, focusing on pre- and neonatal issues.

6.A. Teens: School Absenteeism and Violence

Aware that Prince George’s County has a relatively high chronic school absence rate when compared with the rest of the suburban region jurisdictions (see section 4.B.4 above), the LMB elected to engage some local high school students in a conversation on their attitudes toward truancy in particular and the state of their school more generally.

To this end, a focus group was convened on June 3, 2005 at Suitland High School in Forestville (one of the selected CDPs), where 29 percent of the school’s 2,690 students missed more than 20 days of school during SY 2003-04. The focus group was attended by three members of the consultant’s staff, an employee of the LMB and four Suitland High School ninth graders. Due to strict end-of-year scheduling requirements, the students were not permitted to meet for longer than their

Table 31

Teenagers' Focus Group:
Characteristics of Participants

Question	Participant 1	Participant 2	Participant 3	Participant 4
1. Age	15	15	14	15
2. Grade	9	9	9	9
3. ZIP code	20743	20743	20743	20744
4. Place of residence	District Heights	Capitol Heights	Capitol Heights	Not answered
5. Sex	M	M	F	F
6. Hispanic/Latino	No	No	No	No
7. Race	Af.-Am.	Af.-Am.	Af.-Am.	Af.-Am.
8. To/from school	School bus	School bus	School bus	School bus
9. No. of excused absences	0	1-4	5-10	5-10
10. No. of unexcused absences	0	1-4	5-10	Not answered
11. Skip sch. w/ or w/o friends?	With	With	With	With
12. Arrested/questioned by PD?	Yes	No	No	Yes
13. Witnessed viol. at/near school?	Yes	Yes	No	No
14. Victim of viol. at/near school?	No	No	No	No
15. Witnessed viol. near home?	Yes	No	No	No
16. Victim of viol. near home?	Yes	No	No	No
17. Witnessed viol. in home?	Yes	No	No	Yes
18. Victim of viol. in home?	Yes	No	No	No
19. Carried a weapon?	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
20. Used illegal drugs?	No	No	No	No
21. Consumed alcohol?	No	No	No	No
22. School more/less violent this year?	Less	Less	Less	Less
23. Neighborhood more/less violent this year?	Less	More	More	Less
24. Witness violence, tell whom?	Friend, parent	Parent	Parent, principal	No one
25. School more/less prop. crime this year?	More	Less	Less	More
26. Neigh. more/less prop. crime this year?	More	More	Less	Less
27. Hours TV/week?	72	7	24	"All day"
28. Hours video games/week?	0	0	0	0
29. Hours internet/week?	0	0	1	"All day"
30. Have a curfew?	No	No	Yes	No
31. Rules at home: types/how much TV/video games?	No	Yes	Yes	No
32. Grades	Ds	Fs	Es	Bs, Cs, Ds, "1" F
33. Plan to attend college?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
34. Have a best friend?	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
35. Have boy/girlfriend?	Yes	No	Yes	No

one-hour lunch period; nonetheless, the wide-ranging conversation that ensued was thought provoking and informative, and the students participated with great enthusiasm.

The four students — two boys and two girls — are referred to below as Malcolm, Melanie, Roberta and Terrell (names have been changed). One, Terrell, was at the end of his second attempt at ninth grade; the other three were first-time ninth graders. As a result of their own chronic truancy, all four students were participants in an in-school program called “Truancy and Suspension Reduction.” This program, then in place in five county schools, is run by the Youth Services Bureau under OCYF (now the Office for Children), and is designed to intervene early in a troubled high schooler’s academic career with the intention of preventing future problems with truancy, poor grades and retention in grade. In Suitland High School, the 2005 program had begun with 22 students and was now down to 13 regular attendees. Students and staff members spoke highly of the program.

Before the focus group facilitator engaged the students in conversation, students completed a two-page survey, which collected basic demographic information as well as students’ experiences with violence, crime and other information. Tallied results of the questionnaire are shown in table 31. Once the survey was complete, the facilitator explained the purpose and nature of the discussion that was about to take place, and then asked the following questions.

Question 1: Tell us about your experiences with skipping school. When have you skipped school or thought about skipping school? If you have skipped school, why?

The four students’ answers to this question were simple and to the point: they skipped because they find their school to be a harshly punitive and unpleasant environment in which teachers and administrators “don’t hear us out” and where students are “spied on” with

security cameras. Roberta, referring to what she feels is a paucity of fun activities such as field trips, complained that “we don’t get to do anything.” Some, like Malcolm, gave more specific reasons for truancy.

“I skipped school because I didn’t like the teachers,” Malcolm explained. “I started skipping because I didn’t like the teachers’ attitudes.” The perception that their teachers are uninvolved and uninterested surfaced again and again during the discussion.

At this particular high school, the students explained, the layout of the campus makes it especially easy for students to come and go as they please during the school day. This is because, while ninth graders at Suitland are based in an annex building more than a quarter of a mile from the main building’s entrance, most attend one or more class in the main building. The result is that many students have perfectly legitimate reasons for entering and exiting the ninth grade annex building at all hours of the day, and those doing so illicitly cannot be distinguished from the rest.

Besides, explained Roberta, “[Administrators] are always paying attention to so much [more serious] stuff, they never know if you leave. They need security guards on the front and side doors.”

Malcolm was skeptical that any number of guards would help, since, in his opinion, the current guards are not particularly vigilant or proactive.

Question 2: Tell us about your experiences with violent crime, or violence in general, in or near your school. Do you think your school is more or less violent than it was a year ago, and why? Keep in mind that violence can be physical, psychological or emotional.

Although all four students stated that their school was safer in SY 2004-05 than it had been the previous year (and credited the new principal for that), they nonetheless described

a school where, they said, they never feel confident that they will not fall victim to violence. Of particular concern is the fact that all four students claimed to have personally seen guns in school, with the actual number of guns varying from “two” to “more than ten.” On the accompanying survey, three of the four admitted to having carried a gun or knife as a weapon at some point.

“People get away with a lot of stuff,” said Roberta, describing what she perceived as an essentially lawless school where administrators are aware of only a tiny proportion of the dangerous and illicit activities that take place on school grounds during school hours. As one example, she told of the teacher she claimed to have witnessed telling two scuffling students to “go outside and fight.” The teacher, she said, made no attempt to contact the front office or to otherwise notify any other staff member of the fight in progress. As another example of “people get[ing] away with a lot of stuff,” Terrell said he had heard of two students having sex on the roof of the annex building, and claimed to have observed sexual contact between two students in a stairwell on campus.

Terrell asserted that any teacher attempting to break up a fight would end up assaulted by the fighting students’ friends.

“Besides, people don’t really listen to the teachers because they know [the teachers] aren’t going to do anything,” he said.

A common trigger to violence in the school, according to Roberta, is the perception that a student may have informed on other students to school officials or the authorities.

“Snitches get beat down,” Roberta stated matter-of-factly. She felt that this phenomenon is related to the school’s truancy problem. “They probably are hooking because they snitched on someone.”

Finally, while clearly concerned about the fights and attacks they witness on a regular

basis, the four students had little or no perception that casual violence is anything other than a simple fact of life and expressed the belief that their high school experience is typical. They seemed incredulous when the facilitator pointed out that, in fact, there are quite a few high schools in this country where crime and violence are relatively rare.

“[Violence] happens at all other schools,” said Roberta, dismissively.

Question 3: Tell us about your experiences with property crime. By “property crime,” I mean specifically non-violent crimes, like vandalizing things, auto theft, etc. Do you think there’s more or less of these kinds of crimes than there was a year ago?

“I’ve seen people robbed over a belt, shoes, jackets.” Malcolm made this statement to underline his opinion that property crime is rampant both in his school and in his neighborhood. Indeed, to hear the students tell it, every school day is another opportunity to become a victim of property crime. Several students described the widespread and documented practice of local adult criminals attacking students while they wait for school buses in the morning, making off with prized articles of clothing such as North Face winter coats.

As the four students discussed their experiences with property crime in their school and in their home neighborhoods, it became clear that they were wrestling with some conflicting attitudes. On the one hand, all four claimed never to committed such crimes themselves, expressing disapproval of law breaking in the abstract. But when they began to offer specific examples — particularly examples of joy rides in stolen cars, which two of the four admitted to having experienced — their eyes lit up and they spoke in impressed tones about the many students they know who are, as Melanie puts it, “pros” at such things as car theft, able to disable alarms and rewire ignitions quickly and skillfully.

“All my brothers’ friends steal cars,” said Melanie, and Malcolm — who hastened to emphasize that he had never stolen a car himself — claimed to have ridden in stolen cars “plenty of times.”

When asked why so many of their friends steal cars, Roberta offered this theory: “They steal cars because they are desperate [to have a car] and they know their parents are not going to get them one.” Terrell added his opinion that certain elements of popular culture, such as certain video games, characterize auto theft as something to be undertaken lightly, for fun — that is, in his word, something “cool.”

Question 4: Do you think violence is something that people learn? If so, where do they learn it?

The four students were quick to point to movies and, in particular, video games (as mentioned above) as influencing people toward scofflaw behavior in general and violence in particular. Malcolm expressed disgust at the current generation of hyper-realistic video games in which players engage in criminal and violent behavior for points, and bemoaned the fact that some young children he knows are allowed to play these games for hours. (Interestingly, all four students indicated on the accompanying survey that they never play video games.)

As the conversation continued, several students shifted the blame closer to home.

“Some people get violence from their parents,” said Melanie. “They [are] worst of all. My friend, all her parents and the people in her house have guns.”

Terrell agreed, arguing that there would be less violence “if parents paid more attention to what their kids are doing.”

Melanie added that peer pressure played a role. “Followers do violence because their friends do,” she explained.

Question 5: What do you think would cause the amount of crime and violence to change, either for better or for worse?

At first, the students answered this question cynically, as if resigned to being surrounded by violence by crime. “Our generation is ignorant,” sighed Malcolm. “There is nothing we can do.” To help them focus on specifics, the facilitator asked a follow-up question: “What would you do to improve this school if you were the principal?” The answers to this question suggested that the students blame a certain incorrigible element in the school for the lion’s share of the crime and violence that occur there.

“I would put all the smart students in one particular classroom,” Malcolm proposed. “Students that didn’t want to learn, I would kick them out.”

Elaborating on Malcolm’s idea, Roberta said that she “would get a program for students who can’t keep their grades up. I would have a counselor with an open door policy.”

“Only pick honor roll students for the school,” said Melanie.

Terrell had a practical suggestion: “I would lock all the doors to keep outsiders from coming in,” he said.

Roberta concluded that, rather than more punishments and exclusions, it is the quality of life in the school that needs improvement.

“What we need...are more activities and fund raisers,” she explained, going on to describe a disappointing field trip — the only one all year — she attended. “The physics field trip was not to a museum [as she said was promised], but to a classroom where we just did physics homework. Other schools go to amusement parks, but they are probably scared to take us out.... I just don’t think everyone should have to suffer [for some students’ misbehavior].”

6.B. Hispanic Parents of Young Children: Early School Experience

In the fall of 2002, nearly one quarter (23.4 percent) of Prince George's County's new kindergartners had never before seen the inside of a classroom or participated in formal, organized day care of any kind. One year later, this proportion had grown substantially: almost one third (31.3 percent) of new kindergartners in 2003 lacked early school experience of any kind. During both years, Prince George's County had the highest rate of kindergartners with no early school experience in the suburban region (MSDE 2003a, MSDE 2004a). In the CDPs selected for closer study in this report, rates of preschool attendance varied widely, of course, but the lowest rate was in Langley Park, a low-income, predominantly Hispanic part of the county (BC 2000g). Accordingly, the LMB arranged a focus group of Hispanic parents from Langley Park with children in kindergarten to see what light these residents might be able to shed on the situation.

The focus group was convened on November 16, 2005 at the Langley Park facility of CASA of Maryland, Inc., a non-profit organization specializing in direct education, employment and other services to recent Hispanic/Latino immigrants. The focus group was attended by three members of the consultant's staff (one a Spanish-speaking translator), an employee of the LMB, two CASA of Maryland counselors, and four Hispanic parents of young children — one man and three women.

One participant indicated that she spoke a little English, while the other three said they spoke only Spanish. The participants were a diverse group, each originating from a different country: Peru, Honduras, Ecuador and Mexico. Residence in the U.S. ranged from two to eight years. All participants had children in kindergarten, while two participants also each had a younger child, three years old. None of the children — either the older or the younger ones — was, or ever had been, enrolled in preschool, nursery school or formal day care.

Before the focus-group facilitator engaged the parents in conversation, participants completed a two-page survey that collected basic demographic information on the parents and their children, as well as the parents' impressions of the quality of their children's education in Prince George's County schools. Tallied results are shown in table 32. Once the survey was complete, the facilitator explained the purpose and nature of the discussion that was about to take place, and then asked the following questions.

Question 1: Tell us about your experiences reading to your child. How often do you or a family member read to your child?

All four participants asserted their belief in the importance of reading aloud to their children, but complained of problems finding time to do so. Only two participants indicated that they read to their children regularly, both for about an hour a day. This may not always be formal reading, however, as participants seemed to consider telling stories, singing songs and reading aloud as interchangeable activities. One reason for this may be a lack of reading materials in the home; all four participants stated that they did not have many books in the home, and only two mentioned regular visits to the library. One woman observed that she simply does not have the space for an extensive library; she was, however, one of the regular library users, bringing her children to a local branch to select books about twice a week. Another reason for a lack of emphasis on reading aloud may be the fact that most participants were not read to as children; only one participant reported being read to by her parents.

Question 2: Tell us about your child-care or preschool arrangement.

None of the participants' children was or ever had been enrolled in a preschool, nursery school or formal day-care program. Instead, participants reported that they utilized low-cost babysitting services in neighbors' homes. The parents expressed concern about the qual-

Table 32

Child School Readiness Focus Group:
Characteristics of Participants

Question	Participant 1	Participant 2	Participant 3	Participant 4
1. Age	39	35	38	38
2. ZIP code	20782	20903	20903	20903
3. Place of residence	Hyattsville	Langley Park	Langley Park	Langley Park
4. Hispanic/Latino	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
5. Race	"Spanish"	"Hispana"	"Hispana"	N/A
6. Marital status	Separated	Married	Married	Married
7. Number of children	2	4	2	N/A
8. Home computer access?	No	No	No	No
9. Highest education level	Tech. school grad.	Some tech. school	Tech. school grad.	High sch. grad.
10. 2004 household income	<\$8,980	<\$8,980	<\$8,980	<\$8,980
11. Weekly hours worked outside home	5-8	10	8	25
12. Weekly hours watching TV/videos	15	10	3	12
13. Weekly hours children watch TV/videos	0	14	5	4
14. Children's school performance	Well	Well	Very poorly	Well
<i>Participants are confident that:</i>				
15. They know who to contact with questions about children's school performance?	Confident	Not confident	Not confident	Not confident
16. Their children like school?	Confident	Very confident	Confident	N/A
17. They get needed information about children's school?	Very confident	Confident	Confident	N/A
18. They get useful information from school on how to help their children learn?	Very confident	Confident	Confident	N/A
19. They are satisfied with what their children are being taught?	Very confident	Confident	Confident	N/A
20. They are satisfied with how their children are being taught?	Confident	Confident	Confident	N/A
21. Their school treats them as partners in their children's education?	Confident	Confident	Confident	N/A
22. They would know if their children were having a problem in school?	Little confident	Very confident	Not confident	N/A
23. Their children are learning what they need to do well next year?	Confident	N/A	Confident	N/A
24a. Children's ages	3, 5	5	3, 5	4
24b. Children's current school grade	N/A	N/A	1st	N/A
24c. Attended preschool	No	No	No	N/A
24d. Currently attends afterschool care	N/A	N/A	Yes	N/A

Note: "N/A" stands for "not answered."

ity of such care, observing that some babysitters simply leave children in front of the television for extended periods, but explained that they did not feel that they could afford better; indeed, all four participants indicated that their total household income for 2004 was less than \$8,980. Strikingly, only one parent had even heard of Head Start, a federally funded program designed to provide high-quality school preparation and nutrition to children from low-income families.

Question 3: Tell us about any problems you experienced trying to get your child enrolled in preschool.

The question turned out to be irrelevant, as none of the participants' children had ever been enrolled in a preschool. As noted above, the reason given was expense, not difficulty. Participants reported no difficulties enrolling their children in kindergarten.

Question 4: How did you help prepare your child to enter school?

In general, participants' reactions to questions concerning preparing their children for school and on the topic of "school readiness" or children being "ready to learn" suggested a communication barrier that was due to more than simply language: such concepts did not seem to be understood by these parents in the same way that they are understood by U.S. educators.

Only one parent described activities intended to prepare her child for school academically, while the others seemed to consider the task of preparing a child for school as consisting mainly of the homemaking duties that provide that child with nourishment, clothing and good hygiene, in addition to impressing on the child the importance of school and of paying attention to teachers.

Question 5: What kind of resources would have been helpful to you as you prepared your child for school?

Again, participants did not emphasize academic preparation of their children, though one mentioned educational games and another wished that her child had had some early help with mathematics. Most seemed to feel that they would have been able to do a better job of helping their children prepare for school if they had had more time at home with them in their early years; similarly, they complained of having to compete with the television for their children's attention.

Question 6: What do you think it means to be "ready to learn" or "ready to enter school"?

Participants seemed to consider "school readiness" to be a function of age, not ability. In other words, children are "ready" to go to school at a certain age, at which time — as these parents seemed to conceive of it — the school should be "ready" to teach their children, regardless of their children's ability level. Along these same lines, several parents seemed dissatisfied with the training provided to county school teachers, specifically where child psychology is concerned. One parent specifically voiced concern that county teachers are ill equipped to differentiate instruction; according to her, children in her child's class who are slower learners are not given special attention by their teacher and are even — translating her comments directly — "put in the back of the classroom." On a related topic, one parent complained of "bad children" in her child's school (a problem she identified as resulting from bad parenting), who engage in fighting and bullying and causing other children to grow reluctant to attend school. None of the parents engaged this question in a way that suggests they have a conception of themselves as "their child's first teacher," or any of the other concepts attendant to the idea of children arriving at school "ready to learn."

Question 7: What is one thing that the county could do or provide, that would help increase children's readiness for school?

Participants wished first and foremost for more teachers, to reduce class sizes, as well as

more bilingual teachers. One parent identified conflicts at home as a major source of problems in school and expressed her desire for counselors who could help children communicate better with their parents, have more confidence discussing school and other matters with their parents, and deal with tensions between their parents. Another parent suggested similar counselors for parents. Finally, all were united in their desire for more and better information about available “extra help” programs such as Head Start, Even Start and so on.

6.C. New Mothers: Babies Born Healthy

The prenatal and neonatal indicators examined in section 4.A of this report give cause for concern about the health of infants born in Prince George’s County. County rates of infant mortality, low birth weights (babies born weighing less than 2,500 grams) and late prenatal care (third trimester or later) have all been on the rise in recent years, and county rates on all three of these indicators are consistently higher than either the regional or statewide rates. Meanwhile, relatively few respondents to the LMB’s telephone opinion poll considered infant health to be of any particular concern in the county.

Curious what light might be shed on this issue by county residents themselves, the LMB convened a focus group of mothers of young children at the Surratts-Clinton branch of the Prince George’s County Public Library, in Clinton, on March 30, 2006. The focus group was attended by two members of the consultant’s staff, an employee of the LMB, and five mothers of young children who were recruited from among the attendees of a library story hour. The mothers brought their children with them.

The mothers, four African-Americans and one Caucasian, ranged in age from 20 to 29; their infants were between 8 and 13 months old. None of the mothers had any children other than the infants that were present, which included one set of twins. All of the mothers

were married, and, while only three were college graduates, all had at least some college education. All had annual household incomes of more than \$26,941, and three worked outside the home, from 24 to 30 hours per week. All but one mother had home Internet access.

The mothers varied widely as to the point in their pregnancies at which they had first realized they were pregnant. Two detected their pregnancies in the third week, two in the sixth week and one in the twelfth week. Four of the mothers received prenatal care starting in the first trimester of pregnancy; one did not receive prenatal care until just into the second trimester. Four of the mothers said they visited the doctor at least once per month once their pregnancies had been detected. Only one of the mothers reported her doctor discussing either nutrition or exercise with her during her pregnancy.

None of the mothers reported consuming any alcohol, illegal drugs or tobacco while pregnant. Two mothers reported eating junk food and taking prescription medication.

Though three of the mothers mentioned receiving non-routine or emergency medical care during their pregnancies, none of the infants had low birth weights. (The lightest infant was 2,948 grams.) Two of the mothers reported that their infants had needed non-routine medical care during their first year.

Before the focus-group facilitator engaged the mothers in conversation, participants completed a two-page survey that collected basic demographic information about them and their children and some information concerning their pregnancies. Tallied results of this mini-survey are presented in table 33. Once the survey was complete, the facilitator explained the purpose and nature of the discussion that was about to take place, and then asked the following questions.

Question 1: Tell us about when you found out you were pregnant.

Table 33

Babies Born Healthy Focus Group:
Characteristics of Participants

<i>Question</i>	<i>Participant 1</i>	<i>Participant 2</i>	<i>Participant 3</i>	<i>Participant 4</i>	<i>Participant 5</i>
1. Age	29	21	22	24	20
2. ZIP code	20735	20747	20746	20744	20735
3. Place of residence	Clinton	Clinton	Andrews AFB	Fort Washington	Suitland
4. Hispanic/Latino	No	No	No	No	No
5. Race	African-American	African-American	African-American	African-American	Caucasian
6. Marital status	Married	Married	Married	Married	Married
7. Education	Some college	Some college	College grad.	College grad.	College grad.
8. 2004 HH income	>\$26,941	>\$26,941	>\$26,941	Not sure	>\$26,941
9. Home internet access?	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
10. Hours worked/week	28	0	30	24	0
11. Family doctor?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
12. When learned preg.?	3 wks.	6 wks.	3 wks.	6 wks.	12 wks.
13. When 1st dr. visit?	9 days later	4 days later	3 wks. later	2 wks. later	2 wks. later
14. Freq. of dr. visits?	As recommended	1/mo.	As recommended	As recommended	As recommended
15. Non-routine med. care?	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes
16. Dr. discussed nutrition?	Yes	No	No	No	No
17. Dr. discussed exercise?	Yes	No	No	No	No
18. If had >1 child, rec'd same prenatal care for each?	Yes	1 child	1 child	1 child	1 child
19. Children					
a. Number	2	1	1	1	1
b. Age	8 mo., 8 mo.	9 mo.	8 mo.	11 mo.	13 mo.
c. Birth weight (grams)	2,948; 3,175	3,311	3,234	3,220	3,692
d. Med. care during preg.?	Yes; yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
e. Special medical care while child <1 yr. old?	No; no	Yes	No	No	Yes
20. While pregnant, consumed:					
a. Alcohol?	No	No	No	No	No
b. Illegal drugs?	No	No	No	No	No
c. Presc. drugs?	No	Yes	Yes	No	No
d. Tobacco?	No	No	No	No	No
e. Junk food?	Yes	No	Yes	No	No

Four out of the five mothers indicated that their pregnancies were planned, although three admitted that they were surprised by how quickly they became pregnant once they ceased using birth control. One mother described detecting her pregnancy with a home test, only to be told by her doctor that

she was not pregnant. It was not until her doctor performed a second test that the home-test results were confirmed.

The mother whose pregnancy was not planned said that she continued to have her period during the beginning of her pregnancy, and so did

not have any reason to test herself or ask her doctor to test her. A routine blood test in the twelfth week of her pregnancy gave the first indication that she was pregnant. This delay was potentially dangerous for this mother, who is diabetic, and whose baby was born almost one month early.

Question 2: Tell us about what you ate and did while you were pregnant.

Interestingly, only one of the mothers reported receiving pregnancy-related nutritional advice from her doctor, though another woman whose pregnancy made her hypertensive was advised to reduce salt intake as a result. Nonetheless, four of the mothers reported making significant changes to their diets while pregnant, based on personal research and advice from friends and family members. In general, these changes consisted of reducing intake of sugar, artificial sweeteners and salt, and increasing consumption of protein such as chicken, turkey, nuts, and so forth. One mother reported specifically increasing her consumption of fruits and of seeking additional iron sources, including leafy green vegetables and supplements. All of the mothers said they would have welcomed more pregnancy-related nutritional advice from their doctors.

None of the mothers reported adopting an exercise program as a result of being pregnant, and the hypertensive mother said that she was told by her doctor to suspend her ongoing exercise routine during the pregnancy because of her condition. Other than the latter, all of the mothers reported that their doctors offered no pregnancy-related exercise advice.

Question 3: Tell us about social support during your pregnancy. If you were living with others during your pregnancy — spouse, partner, friend, family — did their eating and exercise habits affect yours?

All of the mothers reported a high level of support from their spouses while pregnant. Most of the mothers said that they and their husbands almost always ate the same things dur-

ing the pregnancy, with three of the mothers reporting that it was their husbands who did the cooking during the pregnancy. One mother reported feeling too sick to eat very much until the sixteenth week of her pregnancy, and that her husband tried to convince her to eat during this period and worked to find appealing dishes. This same mother said that her husband also tried to talk her out of what she described as her “more bizarre cravings.”

Question 4: How often did you see your health-care provider during your pregnancy?

Each mother saw her doctor at least once a month while pregnant, once the pregnancy was detected. The mother whose pregnancy was detected late (twelfth week) eventually came to the conclusion that she should have been going more often, and that she should have been seeing a fetal health specialist due to her diabetes. However, her doctor never referred her to one. Two mothers saw their doctors more often than once a month during certain stages of their pregnancies, one because her cervix began opening at the eighteenth week (for the next six weeks she saw her doctor weekly). The hypertensive mother saw her obstetrician/gynecologist monthly and also, due to her hypertension, made monthly visits to a fetal health specialist. None of the mothers reported feeling that she needed to visit the doctor more often but was prevented by circumstance from doing so.

Question 5: Describe any complications or problems you might have had during your pregnancy.

Three mothers experienced some sort of complication during pregnancy. One went into premature labor at week 29, which she associated with unknowingly consuming a food to which she was allergic the day before. This mother was hospitalized for four days and the labor ceased. There were no apparent adverse affects on her pregnancy; in fact, her baby was born two weeks after the predicted delivery date.

One mother delivered nearly one month early, with the baby suffering no other apparent ill effects beyond those normally associated with premature delivery.

The hypertensive mother was placed on a regimen of bed rest for the final weeks of her pregnancy as a precaution. However, her blood pressure eventually grew so elevated that her baby was delivered via C-section one week before the predicted delivery date, because of concerns for the health of both the baby and the mother. The mother said that her baby suffered no apparent ill effects.

A fourth mother reported no problems other than the fact that her delivery was late. One week after her predicted delivery date, doctors chemically induced her labor and she delivered a healthy baby without incident.

The fifth mother observed that it seemed as though she was hearing of induced deliveries commonly taking place earlier than in the past. She said that she thought that doctors used to wait until the delivery was two weeks late; now, she says, one week is typical.

This concluded the scripted portion of the focus group. As a follow-up question, the facilitator asked the mothers what additional programs, information or other resources they felt that the county should make available to expecting mothers. All of the mothers agreed that no mother should have to go without childbirthing classes in the weeks before delivery, which would acquaint a mother-to-be with what to expect at the hospital and how best to prepare. The women wondered if such classes were available for low-income mothers; if they are, these mothers, several of whom felt that they would probably have qualifies, had never heard of them. In a similar vein, one mother wondered if the county could make classes or information concerning breast feeding available, noting that the advice she had received from a lactation consultant had been invaluable to her own success with this process. Another mother agreed that this was necessary, as she had been unable to obtain any use-

ful advice on the subject from her pediatrician.

One mother wondered what sort of follow-up treatment and observation is performed for babies delivered prematurely to low-income mothers. A friend of hers who is a military dependent had delivered prematurely, this mother explained, and military medical personnel had checked in on the baby at home several times a month for the first year or two of its life. The mother in the focus group who had delivered prematurely said that, if the county had such a program, she was unaware of it.

Finally, all of the mothers agreed that they could have used more pregnancy-related nutrition information. One mother suggested that the county prepare an information packet that would contain not only this information but also contact information for all county pregnancy- and early-childhood-related services, which could be given to county doctors for distribution to their patients.

Part III: Future Focus

Chapter 7. Concluding Focus

This chapter summarizes this report's main findings, compares the statistical analysis to the public opinions collected through polling and focus groups, and suggests possible steps for the future.

7.A. Statistical Analysis

The Prince George's County LMB recommends a continued special focus on at least two of the three result areas examined in this report.

7.A.1. Babies Born Healthy

The county has its work cut out for it as it strives to achieve this result. Among the metropolitan suburban region jurisdictions, Prince George's County has the highest rates of low birth weights, infant mortality and mothers receiving late or no prenatal care. The county has the second-highest rate of births to teenage mothers.

The county's rate of low birth weights has been considerably higher than the state's or the region's since at least 1995, and has increased over that time period as well. The county rate increased more than the statewide rate, although less than the suburban region's rate.

The county's infant mortality rate has declined since 1995, more than the region's decrease but less than the state's. Nonetheless, the county rate consistently exceeds the state and regional rates.

The proportion of county mothers receiving late or no prenatal care has been rising steadily since 1997, and the increase in the county rate substantially exceeds the increases seen state- and regionwide. As well, the county rate has been consistently higher than the state or regional rate since 1995, notwithstanding a period of sharp decrease in the county 1995-1997.

The rate of births to teenage mothers in Prince George's County has been declining steadily since at least 1995. The county rate was very similar to the state rate over this time period, although the county saw a slightly larger decrease than the state. However, the county rate greatly exceeded the regional rate during these years.

Prince George's County should be proud of the reduction in the rate of births to teenagers described above. However, it is clear that the other statistics on county births give cause for concern.

7.A.2. Children Successful in School

According to their scores on the state-mandated Work Sampling System, Prince George's County kindergartners start school relatively less prepared than students in any neighboring jurisdictions.

On a related note, the county's kindergartners are also least likely to have some form of early school experience (nursery school, preschool, day care, etc.), compared to other kindergartners in the suburban region.

This lack of preparation suggests itself as one possible cause of the county's relatively low scores on state performance assessments. Though the Maryland School Assessment reading scores for county third graders have risen since SY 2002-03 (the first year the tests were administered), they remain lower than the scores in any other suburban region jurisdiction. And the county was one of only three suburban region jurisdictions to see a decline in third-grade reading scores on the superceded Maryland School Performance Assessment Program test administered through SY 2001-02. The proportional decrease in county third graders achieving a "satisfactory" score on this test was the largest in the region, at a time when the state and region saw slight increases.

County performance on the indicator "violence-related suspensions" does not give much

cause for concern, but the county's rates of chronic school absence at all grade levels are unacceptably higher than the rates seen in the other suburban region jurisdictions, the region as a whole and the state itself.

Of course, any discussion of education-related shortcomings risks appearing to cast blame on parents and the schools, but such is not the intention here. Rather, the intention is to point out in a dispassionate way that problems exist, as a first step toward solving them.

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

When all tracked categories of child maltreatment are combined, Prince George's County has the highest rate in the suburban region, exceeding as well the state and regional rates. However, when the categories of abuse are broken down, it is only in the physical abuse category that the county leads its neighbors. Incidents of neglect and of sexual abuse are lower in the county than in all but two of its neighbors. This is not to minimize the county's physical abuse problem, but rather to show that (a) this is a multi-part indicator and (b) the county is doing well on two of its three parts. Concentrating on the third at this point, it may be hoped, can only bring improvement.

It is so rare that juveniles die violent deaths in this area that the data on this indicator are highly unstable, and any conclusions drawn therefrom must be considered tentative in the extreme. That said, the county had the second-lowest rate of such deaths in 2002 and saw a much larger proportional decrease 1999-2002 than either the state or the region as a whole.

There is also no real cause for concern about the county's rate of arrests of juveniles for property crime: the county has the second-lowest rate of such arrests and the second-highest rate of decrease in such arrests 1994-2003 in the region.

Also, even though the county has the highest rate of arrests of juveniles for murder in the

region, it had a higher decrease in the rate of such arrests 1994-2003 than any of its neighbors. Besides, the actual number of these arrests tends to be so small (two in 2003, for example) as to render murders by juveniles almost statistical non-events.

And though a higher proportion of county juveniles are arrested for violent crimes than in all of the other suburban region jurisdictions save one, it must be pointed out that — among the suburban region jurisdictions — Prince George's County saw the largest proportional decrease in such arrests 1994-2003.

7.B. Focus Groups

The LMB convened three focus groups to help improve understanding of several issues that seemed particularly problematic, at least when the county's performance is compared to that of its neighbors: chronic school absence; lack of early school experience; and too many mothers receiving late or no prenatal care.

The high-schoolers who attended the chronic school absence focus group shared personal experiences and observations that are distressing to anyone concerned about the state of education in this county. Their weariness with teachers they find unresponsive and uncaring, their blithely accepting attitude about violence and crime, and their cynicism regarding the prospect of improvement suggest that the quality of the day-to-day educational experiences of some county students leaves much to be desired.

The second focus group was concerned with low rates of preschool attendance in the county, particularly among Hispanic children, and consisted of Hispanic parents of young children. Indeed, the parents in attendance — all relatively recent immigrants with little to no ability in conversational English — said that none of their children were or ever had been in attendance at any kind of formal preschool or other early school experience. The reason given was expense, which made it all the more striking that only one attendee had ever heard

of preschool programs aimed at low-income families, such as Head Start. All of the attendees expressed a desire for more and better information about such programs, although it was not clear that these particular parents saw a distinct link between preschool and “school readiness,” at least as the term is used among U.S. educators.

The Hispanic parents also voiced concerns about the training of the county teachers they had encountered, pointing specifically to what they saw as a lack of preparation in child psychology (partly manifested in what they described as “bad behavior” among their children’s classmates) and in differentiating instruction for different ability levels. All of the parents wished for more (and more bilingual) teachers and smaller class sizes, and several mentioned that they would like counseling to help them reduce parent/child conflict in the home.

As for the focus group for mothers of newborns, this group was a little hard to draw conclusions from, seeing as how all the mothers seemed essentially to have done the right things and to have taken care of themselves reasonably well. However, the four participants’ repeated mention of the need for more publicly available information on nutrition should perhaps been taken into consideration by the county.

7.C. Polling Data

The LMB commissioned a random telephone survey as another information-gathering tool. The main goal was to compare the significance of certain issues as determined through statistical analysis with the emphasis placed on these same issues by members of the public. The three issues that were of highest concern to survey respondents were teenage motherhood, property crimes by teenagers and violent crimes by teenagers. Statistical analysis found cause for real concern on only one of these issues, teenage motherhood, though there was less cause for concern on this indicator than there was with each of the other three birth-

related indicators.

In general, the public’s expressed concern tended to group the indicators almost exactly as this report does: with little exception, crime-related indicators ranked high in the minds of the public, behind only teenage motherhood; school-related indicators ranked just behind crime; and birth-related issues (except for teenage motherhood) ranked lowest, even though it is in the area of birth-related health issues that the county compares least favorably with its neighbors. In other words, public concern did not match the statistical analysis particularly well.

7.D. Planning Implications

An analysis of this nature can only identify topics and issues worthy of closer examination and estimate in a very general way the resonance of such topics and issues with the public at large. In other words, it is manifestly not the purpose of this report to set policy or definitively identify one issue as “more important” than others. Ultimately, it is up to the county’s leaders and its populace to set priorities and determine the steps necessary to accomplish those priorities. That said, the statistical and public opinion data in this report suggest numerous research questions and possible next steps.

7.D.1. Future Research Questions

This report may be thought of as one step in an ongoing process of analysis and improvement. The statistical data reported here raise many questions for future study. The list below presents possible research questions for selected indicators under all three results.

7.D.1.1. Result 1: Babies Born Healthy

(a) Low birth weights: Among the five suburban region counties, Prince George’s County has the highest rate of low-birth-weight babies (i.e., born weighing less than 2,500 grams). The county rate has been trending upward since 1999.

Possible research questions about LBW:

- Why is the LBW rate increasing?
- Is it increasing among all mothers, or among members of specific ethnic/racial groups?
- Is it increasing among mothers of all ages?
- What correlations exist in this county between LBW and early prenatal care?
- Are mothers who recently immigrated to the U.S. more or less likely to have a low-birth-weight baby?
- What do mothers who experience LBW have in common?

(b) Infant mortality: Among the five suburban region counties, Prince George's County has the highest infant mortality rate. The county rate has been trending upward since 2000.

Possible research questions about infant mortality:

- Why is the county's infant mortality rate increasing?
- Is it increasing among all mothers, or among members of specific ethnic/racial groups?
- Is it increasing among mothers of all ages?
- What correlations exist in this county between infant mortality and early prenatal care?
- Are mothers who recently immigrated to the U.S. more or less likely to experience infant mortality?
- What do mothers who experience infant mortality have in common?

(c) Prenatal care: Among the five suburban counties, Prince George's County has the highest rate of mothers receiving late (third-trimester) or no prenatal care. This rate had been decreasing (an improvement) until 1997, when it turned sharply upward.

Possible research questions about prenatal care:

- Why is the county's rate of women receiving late or no prenatal care increasing so dramatically?
- What policy changes or other events in or around 1997 might have triggered the

ensuing increase in the rate of women receiving late or no prenatal care?

- Is the rate increasing among all mothers, or among members of specific ethnic/racial groups?
- Is it increasing among mothers of all ages?
- Are mothers who recently immigrated to this country more or less likely to receive late/no prenatal care?
- How cognizant are county residents of the importance of prenatal care?

7.D.1.2. Result 2: Children Successful in School

(a) Kindergarten readiness: As shown by their scores on the Work Sampling System assessment, Prince George's County kindergartners arrive in school less "ready to learn" than do kindergartners in the other four suburban region counties. One possibly related factor might be the low rate of early school experience (i.e., preschool, nursery school, day care, Head Start, etc.) among county kindergartners. Out of the five suburban area jurisdictions, Prince George's County has the lowest rate of kindergartners with some form of early school experience; the county rate also worsened between SY 2002-03 and SY 2003-04. Among the CDPs chosen for study in this report, predominantly Hispanic neighborhoods had the lowest rates of kindergartners with some form of early school experience.

Possible research questions about early school experience:

- Is the county's rate of kindergartners with no early school experience growing according to other measures?
- If so, is it growing among all ethnic/racial groups?
- Is it as pronounced among county Hispanics as the data here suggest?
- If so, what cultural reasons might there be for this?
- Are recent immigrants more or less likely to ensure that their children have early school experience?
- How cognizant are county residents of the benefits of early school experience?

(b) Third-grade reading scores: Prince George's County third graders consistently score lower on standardized tests of reading ability than third graders in the other four suburban area jurisdictions, going back to 1994. Further, from 1994 to 2002, the proportion of county third graders scoring "satisfactory" in reading on the state's MSPAP standardized test decreased substantially, unlike every other suburban region jurisdiction save Montgomery County. (The MSA, introduced in 2003, is too new to provide reliable trend information.)

Possible research questions about third-grade reading scores:

- Which county third graders achieve at grade level on state and other assessments?
- Do students from particular schools score higher than students at other schools, or do most schools show widely varying results?
- Do students from particular parts of the county score higher than students from other parts of the county?
- What factors and strategies do Prince George's County and Montgomery County have in common? (Both counties saw almost identical rates of decline in third grade reading achievement on MSPAP, 1994-2002.)
- Do the state assessment instruments provide fair measures of minority student achievement?
- Are high scores on statewide tests like MSA (MSPAP's replacement) associated with high academic achievement later on?
- What do county students, parents and teachers think would help solve this problem?

(c) Violence-related suspensions: The available data suggest that Prince George's County is not doing particularly better or worse than its neighbors where this indicator is concerned. However, differences in definitions of "violence-related" from one county to another may cloud the issue.

Possible research question about violence-related suspensions:

- Is it accurate to say that Prince George's County schools are less violent than the schools in some neighboring counties, or is it the case that violent students are handled outside of the suspension system (expulsion, arrest and so on)?
- Do those neighboring counties with higher violence-related suspension rates truly have more violent schools than Prince George's County does, or do they have stricter behavior codes and/or enforcement?
- How much violence is tolerated at the micro level (students, teachers) in county schools without being reported, compared to schools in neighboring counties? In other words, is violent and/or threatening behavior more accepted in one county's schools than in another's?

(d) Chronic school absence: An extremely large proportion of county students misses 20 or more days of school per year, much larger than in neighboring counties. In fact, almost one-third of county high schoolers missed 20 or more school days in SY 2003-04.

Possible research questions about chronic school absence:

- Why is it so easy for students to skip school?
- How tolerant of school absenteeism are county parents?
- Why do so many students want to skip school?
- How many county students skip school because of fears of violence?
- What do students who are skipping school do instead of going to school?
- What do county students, parents and teachers think would help solve this problem?

7.D.1.3. Result 3: Children Safe in Their Families and Communities

(a) Juvenile violent deaths: Statistically, this indicator is of little concern in the county. But that does not mean that county juveniles are not exposed to lesser forms of violence.

Possible research questions about juvenile's exposure to violence:

- How much violence are county youths exposed to?
- How many county youths are hospitalized because of violence?
- How many county youths are afraid that they might become victims of violence?
- How likely are young victims of violence to commit violent crimes later?

(b) Child abuse and neglect: The county's overall rate of "indicated" child abuse and neglect cases is higher than that of its neighbors, though Anne Arundel and Charles counties have rates similar to the county's. This overall rate is composed of various subcategories, however, and it is only in one of these (physical abuse) that the county's rate exceeds the rates in the other suburban region jurisdictions. Prince George's County's rates of child neglect and sexual abuse (the other two main categories) tend more toward the middle of the suburban region jurisdictions' rates.

Possible research questions about child abuse and neglect:

- What cultural practices and traditions might contribute to the county's relatively high rate of child physical abuse?
- What relationship, if any, exists between race/ethnicity and likelihood of child physical abuse?
- What are county parents' and caregivers' views on corporal punishment of children?
- How cognizant are county parents and caregivers of the county's and state's laws and guidelines concerning the physical punishment of children?
- Are the children of recent immigrants more or less likely to be abused?
- What sort of acts are typical of child physical abuse in this county?
- How easily can county parents access support services (e.g., counseling, hotlines, information about alternatives to physical punishment, etc.) that could help prevent child abuse? Are there any such resources available 24 hours per day?

- What do county parents think would improve this situation?

(c) Juvenile arrests: This report considered juvenile arrests for property crimes, violent crimes and homicide. The only one of these indicators that seemed problematic for the county was juvenile violent crime arrests. Prince George's County had the second-highest rate of such arrests in the suburban region, although it should not be overlooked that this rate decreased 1994-2003.

Possible research questions about juvenile arrests:

- Do juvenile arrest rates paint a realistic picture of juvenile crime in this county?
- How many unsolved crimes bear hallmarks of youthful perpetrators?
- How did the county lower the rate of juvenile violent crime arrests? Can this success be expanded?

7.D.2. Next Steps

In prioritizing the next steps and research questions the county elects to pursue, some consideration must be given to the general public's perception of these and other issues concerning the health and well-being of county children. It would be a mistake to concentrate only on those issues on which the public holds strong opinions, since some of these (juvenile homicide, for example) seem much more important to the public at large than the statistical analysis performed for this report would suggest. But it is important to find a balance between the public's interest in and the statistical importance of the issues the county chooses to address first.

This report's statistical analysis, when considered in combination with the results of the public poll, suggests that the county would do well to concentrate on education-related issues as a first step. Prince George's County lags behind its neighbors on several measures of student achievement, and the public's concerns about education were exceeded only by its concerns about crime (and teenage mother-

hood). Also, the poll's open-ended question returned more comments related to education than to any other topic. It therefore seems likely that any programs perceived by the public as improving the quality of county schools would meet with wide support, at least among parents with children (the population that was surveyed). Though the public was more concerned about juvenile crime than it was about education (perhaps to an extreme not supported by the available data), it seems possible that improving the county's schools and providing more extensive mentoring, counseling and after-school and summer programs might improve some of the county's juvenile crime statistics as well.

The question of maternal and neo-natal health issues (under the result "babies born healthy") is more difficult. It is arguably on such issues that the county is most out of step with its neighbors; however, these issues did not appear particularly compelling to survey respondents. The three official birth-related indicators selected for this project ranked toward the bottom of the list of public concerns, even though teenage motherhood — a related issue though not one of the officially selected indicators — topped the list. Clearly, the problems of infant mortality, mothers receiving late or no prenatal care and low-birth-weight babies deserve urgent, ongoing attention, and yet it appears that the public would welcome more aggressive intervention into other issues entirely. However, the fact that public concern about teenage motherhood runs so high provides an "in": any public campaign to reduce the rate of teenage motherhood — a campaign which the poll suggests would meet with popular support — could quite naturally include components that address these other birth-related issues, and could even grow out of or link to the after-school and summer programs alluded to above. (That increased education is needed on the importance of these issues is made clear by the fact that, on the public opinion poll, the three official birth-related indicator questions received the three highest proportions of "don't know" answers: DKs were 30.3 percent of

responses to the infant mortality question, 28.4 percent of responses to the low birth weights question, and 10.4 percent of responses to the prenatal care question.)

Whatever courses of action are taken, and as the public opinion poll made clear, Prince George's County has a particularly valuable resource that greatly improves its chances of success in any and all endeavors: a diverse, engaged and informed populace, truly concerned about the health, safety and well-being of the county's children, youth and families.

The End

Appendix 1: Glossary

This glossary gives the meaning of some of the more frequently encountered technical terms, acronyms and abbreviations in this study.

AAFB: Andrews Air Force Base.

CCYF: Commission for Children, Youth and Families (Prince George's County's Local Management Board or LMB).

CDP: Census designated place.

CDP-ZIP: Approximate equivalencies used to compare information organized by CDP with information organized by ZIP code.

CIP: Census incorporated place.

DK: People who answered "don't know" to a given telephone survey question.

Dual parents: Telephone poll respondents who are part of a two-adult household with children, as opposed to single parents.

Early school experience: Umbrella term for all formal pre-school experience, including Head Start, Even Start, preschool, nursery school and various forms of day care facilities.

IGS: InterGroup Services, Inc., a Baltimore consulting company.

LBW: Low birth weight.

LMB: Local Management Board.

Lower-end earners: Respondents to the telephone survey with annual household income of zero to \$64,999.

MSA: Maryland School Assessments, state-mandated standardized tests administered yearly since 2003.

MSPAP: Maryland School Performance Assessment Program, state-mandated standardized tests administered yearly 1993-2002.

OCYF: Office of Children, Youth and Families, former name of the state agency now known as the Governor's Office for Children.

PNC: Prenatal care.

SCYF: Subcabinet for Children, Youth and Families, a state-level group of the heads of all state agencies whose purview includes services, of any sort, to infants, children and youth; a sort of state equivalent to the counties' LMBs.

Suburban region: Anne Arundel, Calvert, Charles, Howard, Montgomery and Prince George's counties.

SY: School year.

Unemployment rate: A percentage based on the number of respondents to a telephone survey who actively sought work in the four weeks before the survey. Unemployment rates do not include people not seeking work (such as homemakers, discouraged job-seekers and prisoners and other institutionalized populations).

Upper-end earners: Respondents to the telephone survey with annual household income of \$65,000 and higher.

WSS: Work Sampling System.

Appendix 2: LMB Members

Appendix 2 lists the members of the Prince George's County LMB, or Commission for Children, Youth and Families, as it is officially known.

Chair:

Maralita L. Freeny
Director
Memorial Library System
Prince George's County

Director:

Dr. Judy M. DuBose
Administrator
Administration for Children, Youth and Families
Prince George's County

Members:

Adrienne L. Bennett
Director
Department of Family Services
Prince George's County

Dr. Wesley Boykin
Division of Strategic Planning
Prince George's County Public Schools
Prince George's County

Capt. Victoria Brock
Youth and Family Services
Prince George's County Police Department
Prince George's County

Gwendolyn Clerkley
Acting Director
Health Department
Prince George's County

Rev. John Henry Coursey
Citizen Representative

Thomas R. Hendershot
Council Member
Prince George's County Council
Prince George's County

Dr. James A. Dula
Deputy Chief Administrative Officer
Health and Human Services
Office of the County Executive
Prince George's County

Karyn Lynch
Department of Social Services
Prince George's County

Darilyn E. Marinelli
Maryland National Capital Parks and Planning Commission

Douglas Mohler
Department of Juvenile Services
Prince George's County

Joseph Puhalla
Business Representative
Workforce Services Corporation

Thomas M. Thompson
Director
Department of Housing and Community Development
Prince George's County

Christine Waddler
Director
Core Service Agency
Department of Family Services
Prince George's County

Appendix 3: Project Consultants

Appendix 3 gives details on InterGroup Services, Inc. the project's prime contractor, and Gonzales Marketing and Research Strategies, Inc., the polling subcontractor.

Prime Contractor:
InterGroup Services, Inc.

IGS's principals have a combination of over 25 years' experience in directly managing, or managing projects for, non-profits, advocacy coalitions and government agencies. IGS's network of 11 regular staff and over 30 consultants includes professionals with extensive experience in research methodology, project management, communications, data management, systems development and data analysis. IGS is a U.S. Small Business Administration-certified small and disadvantaged business and a Maryland Department of Transportation-certified minority-owned business. IGS personnel involved in this study were:

Cyd T. Lacanienta, M.S.W.
Chair & CEO

Douglas P. Munro, Ph.D.
President, COO & CFO

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Patrick E. Gonzales, president of Gonzales Marketing and Research Strategies, Inc. was formerly president of Mason-Dixon Campaign Polling and Strategy, Inc. and Gonzales/Arcott Research and Communications, Inc. Over the past two decades Gonzales has polled and analyzed over a thousand political elections, in addition to numerous public opinion and marketing research projects nationwide.

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