

III. Desired Outcome: Children Live in Safe and Stable Families and Communities

Table 4 lists indicators related to safe and stable families and communities. In Santa Clara County, the percentage of children living in poverty is much lower than the percentage across California, but that hardly captures the economic reality for families in the county, where the cost of living is so high that many families with incomes above the poverty line struggle to make ends meet.

Table 4. Children Live in Safe and Stable Families and Communities: Key Indicators in Santa Clara County

Family Economic Self-Sufficiency

- Household income
- Housing affordability
- Children living in poverty
- Children on CalWORKs
- Children enrolled in free/reduced price school meal program

Child Maltreatment and Foster Care

Safety at School

- Exposure to weapons
- Experienced theft or property damage

Juvenile Misdemeanor and Felony Arrests

Injuries and Deaths

- Unintentional injuries
- Intentional injuries
- Death rates

The data suggest the following:

- Child maltreatment and foster care indicators in the county have remained fairly stable in recent years.

- The percentage of public school students enrolled in the free or reduced price meal program increased from 27.3% in 2002 to 35.2% in 2006.
- In 2005-06, more than one in four students in grades seven, nine and 11 reported damage to personal property or theft at school, and about three in 10 reported exposure to weapons at school, but fewer than 7% perceived their school as unsafe.
- The juvenile felony and misdemeanor arrest rates have recently risen after years of decline.
- Unintentional injuries are far more common than intentional injuries among children of all ages. Rates of hospitalizations for injuries have risen since 1997, but increases have leveled off in recent years.
- The overall child/youth death rate in the county has declined since 1996, but the death rate for African American/Black children and youth has increased.

Key issues related to child safety and stability are summarized below, and more data are available at www.kidsdata.org.

Family Economic Self-Sufficiency

Low household income can introduce stress, as parents struggle to provide food and shelter for their children. Parents may find it more difficult to spend time with and actively promote the development of their children if they are working long hours or juggling multiple jobs to make ends meet. Children who grow up in poverty are more likely to go hungry, to live in overcrowded or unstable housing and unsafe neighborhoods, and to receive a poorer education. They also tend to have less access to health care, child care and other community resources, such as after-school programs, sports and extracurricular opportunities.⁸⁰

In 2005, the median family income in Santa Clara County was \$89,716, well above the California median of \$61,476.⁸¹ The percentage of children living below the Federal Poverty Level (defined as an annual income of \$18,850 for a family of four) rose from 8.3% in 2001 to 10.5% in 2004 (44,747 children in 2004), but it is still far below the state figure of 18.7% in 2004.⁸² The percentage of public school students enrolled in CalWORKs (California Work Opportunity and Responsibility to Kids – the renamed welfare program) is even lower, at just 5.0% in 2004.⁸³

At the same time, the cost of living in the county is so high that many families with incomes above the Federal Poverty Level cannot make ends meet. The soaring cost of housing means that only 19% of all households in the county could afford to purchase the median-priced home in the county in 2005.⁸⁴ The average two-bedroom apartment in the county rented for \$1,313 in 2005.⁸⁵ In 2003, a family with one adult, one preschooler and a school-age child needed more than a \$65,000 annual income to meet basic needs in Santa Clara County.⁸⁶ Based on data from the 2000 Census, individuals in as many as 39% of family households in the county might live just above, at, or below this self-sufficiency standard,⁸⁷ suggesting that about four in 10 of all the family households in the county might be struggling to make ends meet. Perhaps not surprisingly, therefore, a greater proportion of public school students was enrolled in the free or reduced price meal program in 2006 than in 2002 (35.2% versus 27.3%), although that percentage is still below the 2006 state average of 50.1%.⁸⁸

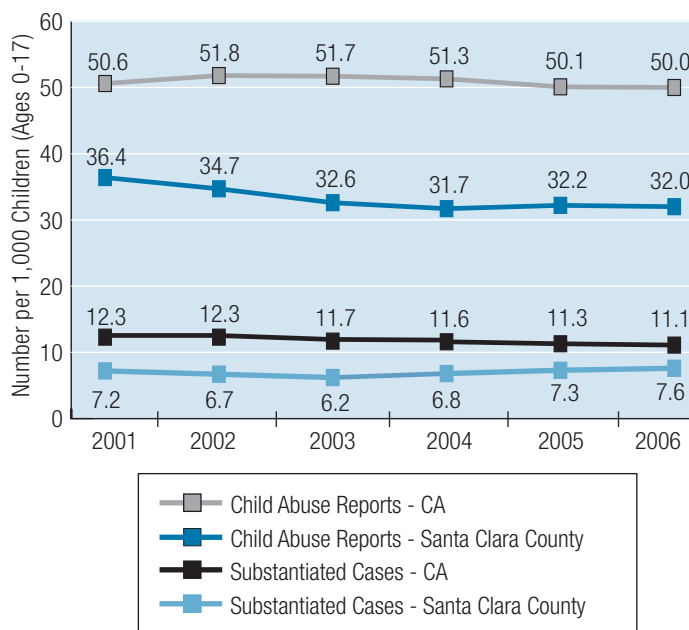
Safety at Home: Child Maltreatment and Foster Care

Factors associated with increased rates of child maltreatment (child abuse or neglect) include parents who have problems with substance abuse, domestic violence in the homes, chronic poverty, unemployment, homelessness and parental mental health disorders.⁸⁹ Children who have been abused or neglected experience higher rates of suicide,

depression, substance abuse, difficulties in school and other behavioral problems later in life, and they also are at greater risk of later mistreating their own children.⁹⁰ When maltreatment is deemed sufficiently serious and/or is substantiated by the court, children are removed from their homes and placed with relatives or foster parents.

Two indicators commonly are used to assess rates of child maltreatment: the number of child abuse/neglect reports per 1,000 children (ages 0-17) received by the county's Child Protective Services, and the number of reports per 1,000 children that were substantiated. On both measures, county rates were about two-thirds the analogous rates for California.⁹¹ In Santa Clara County, figures were fairly steady during 2001-2006, with a slight decrease in the rate of reports but a slight increase in the rate of substantiated cases (see Figure 13).⁹²

Figure 13. Rates of Child Abuse Reports and Substantiated Cases, Santa Clara County and California



Source: Needell, B., et al. (2006). Child Welfare Services Reports for California. University of California at Berkeley Center for Social Services Research website. <http://cssr.berkeley.edu/CWSCMSreports/>, as cited on www.kidsdata.org.

Note: In 2006, there were 14,246 child abuse reports in Santa Clara County and 482,897 in California. In the same year, there were 3,377 substantiated cases in Santa Clara County and 106,954 in California.

Children Live in Safe and Stable Families and Communities

As of July 2006, Santa Clara County had 2,088 children in foster care, a 13% decline from 2002, although the rate of children entering foster care for the first time has remained steady at about two per 1,000 children.⁹³ Most of the children who entered foster care for the first time in the county in 2005 were removed from their families because of neglect (79.1%); 13.8% were removed due to physical abuse and 4.7% due to sexual abuse.⁹⁴

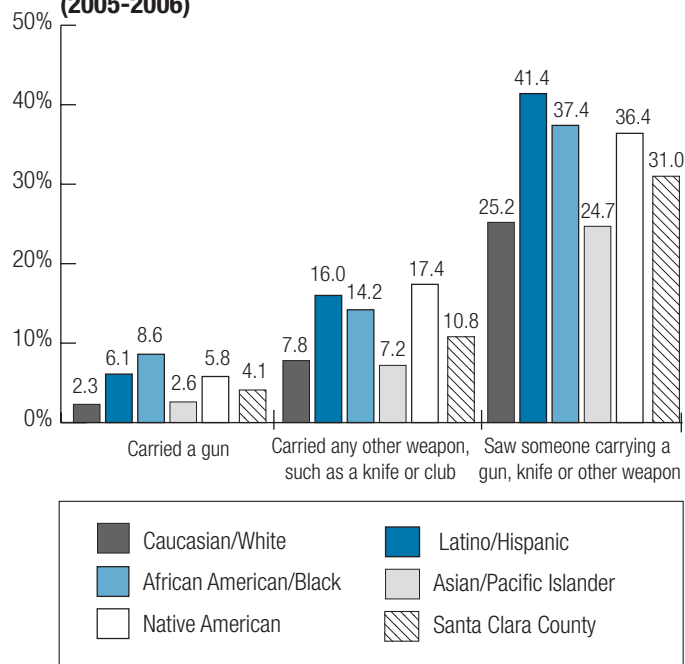
The rate of substantiated cases of abuse varies across racial/ethnic groups. In 2006, the rate of substantiated cases of abuse for African American/Black children was 29.0 per 1,000 children (304 cases), as compared to 13.9 for Hispanic/Latino children (2,071 cases), 4.4 for Caucasian/White (665 cases) and 2.5 for Asian/Pacific Islander (285 cases).⁹⁵ Children of color also are over-represented in the foster care caseload.⁹⁶

Safety at School

In 2005-06, 27% of seventh, ninth and 11th graders reported they had experienced theft or personal property damage at school during the previous year.⁹⁷ One in 25 students admitted that they themselves had carried a gun to school during the previous year; about one in 10 reported that they had carried another weapon, such as a knife or club to school; and nearly one in three said that they had seen someone with a weapon in school (see Figure 14).⁹⁸ Despite these statistics, on average, only 6.6% of seventh, ninth and 11th grade students reported feeling unsafe or very unsafe at school (see Figure 15).⁹⁹

Once again, however, the county averages disguise differences across racial/ethnic groups, with Asian and Caucasian/White students less likely to report exposure to weapons at school and more likely to report their schools were safe than children in other groups (see Figures 14-15).

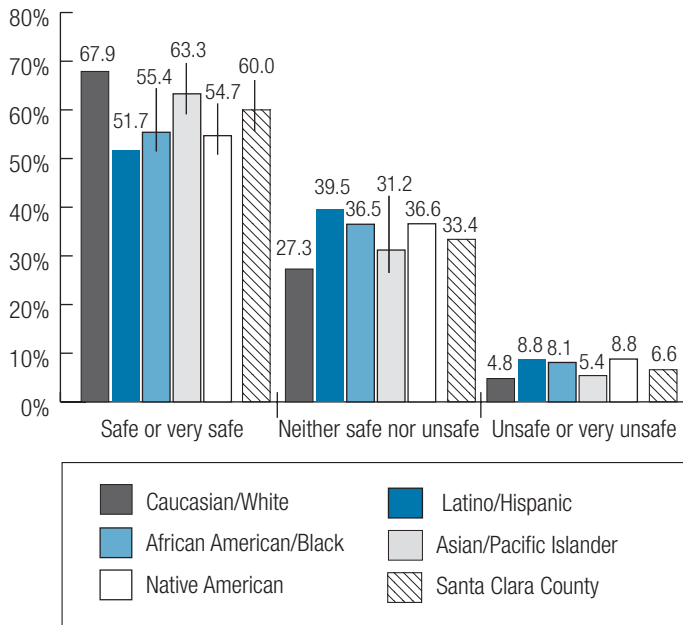
Figure 14. Percentage of Santa Clara County 7th, 9th and 11th Graders Reporting Possession of or Exposure to Weapons at School Within the Past 12 Months (2005-2006)



Source: California Healthy Kids Survey 2005-2006, Santa Clara County Department of Public Health.

Note: Survey questions were, *During the past 12 months, how many times on school property have you carried a gun? During the past 12 months, how many times on school property have you carried any other weapon, such as a knife or club? During the past 12 months, how many times on school property have you seen someone carrying a gun, knife, or other weapon?* Response options: 0, 1, 2 or 3, 4 or more. Of the 29,554 Santa Clara County students surveyed, 6,484 were Caucasian/White, 9,274 Hispanic/Latino, 1,211 African American/Black, 9,860 Asian/Pacific Islander and 976 Native American.

Figure 15. Perceived Safety of School as Reported by 7th, 9th and 11th Graders in Santa Clara County, by Race/Ethnicity (2005-2006)



Source: California Healthy Kids Survey 2005-2006, Santa Clara County Department of Public Health.

Note: Of the 29,554 Santa Clara County students surveyed, 6,484 were Caucasian/White, 9,274 Hispanic/Latino, 1,211 African American/Black, 9,860 Asian/Pacific Islander and 976 Native American.

Juvenile Misdemeanor and Felony Arrests

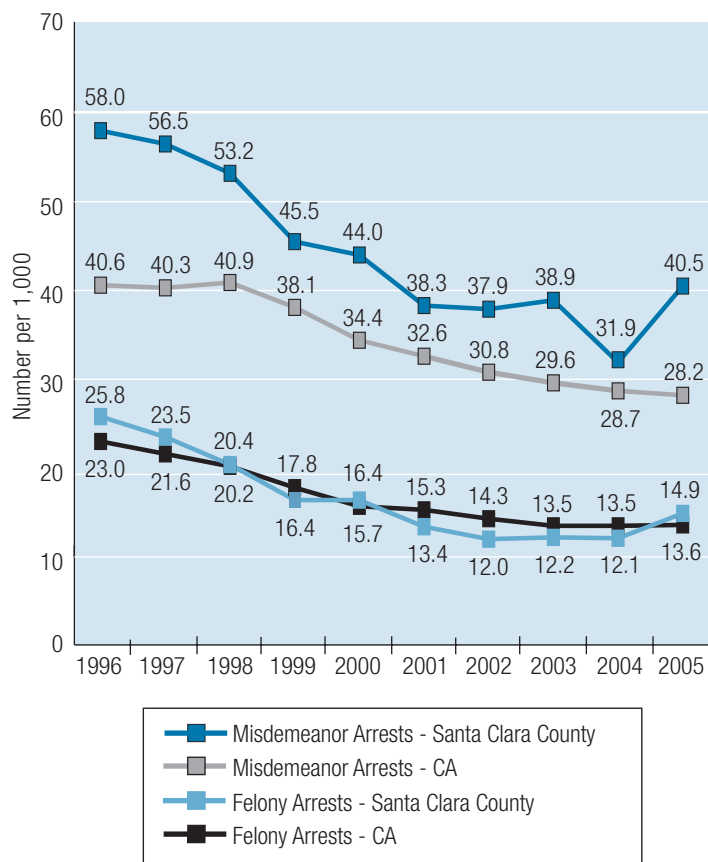
Youth who have been arrested are at risk of not gaining the educational credentials they need to succeed as adults or to obtain sustained employment. Without appropriate services and support, such youth also may be at risk for re-arrest.

Juvenile misdemeanor arrests are for crimes such as petty theft, drug offenses, driving under the influence, disturbing the peace, malicious mischief, trespassing, or assault and battery.¹⁰⁰ The rate of juvenile felony arrests is an indicator of the most serious problematic behaviors. Felonies include crimes that involve injury or substantial property loss and may include violent crimes or property, drug, alcohol, sex and other offenses.¹⁰¹

Juvenile felony or misdemeanor arrest rates are not perfect indicators of actual criminal activity in communities. The number of arrests can change as a result of changes in the number of police on the streets, legislative or judicial action to increase or reduce penalties, or trends in prosecutors' charging decisions. Many felony charges are reduced to misdemeanors or are dismissed in the later phases of the court process.

The rate of juvenile misdemeanor arrests in Santa Clara County fell by 45% from 58 per 1,000 in 1996 to 31.9 per 1,000 in 2004, but it rose in 2005 to 40.5 and remains higher than the California rate (see Figure 16).¹⁰² In Santa Clara County and California, the juvenile felony arrest rate dropped from 1996 to 2004, but the county rate increased in 2005 and is now slightly higher than the California rate (see Figure 16).¹⁰³

Figure 16. California and Santa Clara County Juvenile Misdemeanor and Felony Arrest Rates, Ages 10-17



Source: California Department of Justice, California Criminal Justice Profiles, <http://caag.state.ca.us/cjisc/index.htm>; http://stats.doj.ca.gov/cjisc_stats/prof05/00/4C.htm.

Note: In 2005, there were 7,747 juvenile misdemeanor arrests and 2,858 juvenile felony arrests in the county.

Juvenile felony arrest rates are higher for African American/Black and Hispanic/Latino youth than for youth from other racial/ethnic groups. The rate for African American/Black youth in 2005 (49.8 juvenile felony arrests per 1,000) is about twice as high as the rate for Hispanic/Latino youth (25.9), and almost six times higher than the rate for Caucasian/White youth (8.6).¹⁰⁴

Similar racial/ethnic disparities in the juvenile justice system are seen nationally. The Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act reauthorization in 2002 requires that states assess and address the disproportionate contact of youth of color at every point within the juvenile justice system.

Injuries and Deaths

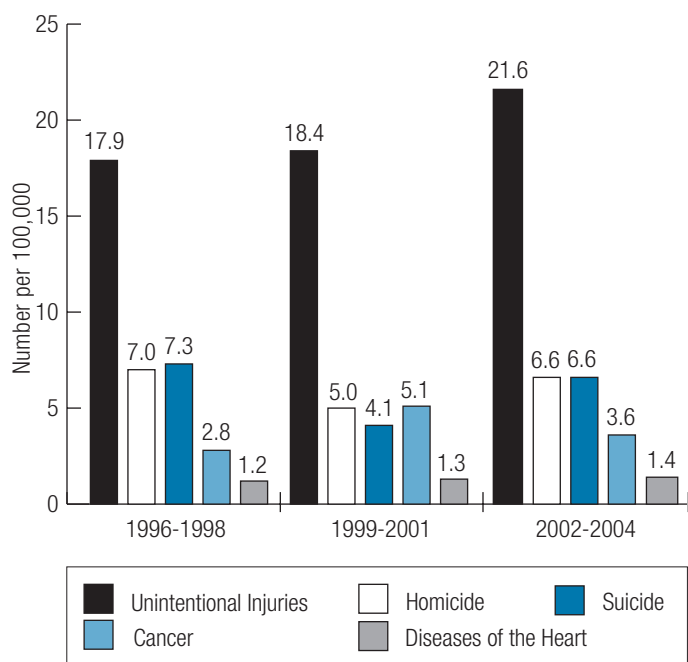
Key measures of children’s safety are rates of injuries (typically assessed by rates of hospitalization for injury) and deaths. Most hospitalizations for injury are to treat *unintentional*, preventable injuries such as those due to motor vehicle, bicycle, or skateboarding accidents, falls, fires, etc. Hospitalizations for *intentional* injuries are frequently due to child abuse; assaults with firearms, knives or other objects; and self-inflicted injuries.¹⁰⁵

Rates of non-fatal injury hospitalizations (unintentional and intentional combined) for children and youth ages 0-20 are lower in Santa Clara County than in California.¹⁰⁶ The county rate was 264.7 per 100,000 in 1997; then it hovered near 325 in 2002 and 2003, and then fell to 298.9 in 2004.¹⁰⁷ Injury hospitalization rates increase as children grow older, and the highest rates of both intentional (203.2 per 100,000 in 2004) and unintentional (301.5) injury hospitalizations occur among 16- to 20-year-olds.¹⁰⁸ Unintentional injury hospitalizations occur much more frequently than intentional ones throughout the age span and especially for children under age 12.¹⁰⁹

Death rates among children and youth have fallen in recent years in Santa Clara County and remain lower than state figures (i.e., 25.7 deaths per 100,000 children/youth in 2002-04 for the county versus 39.2 for California).¹¹⁰ Death rates in Santa Clara County and California are highest for the oldest youth. In 2002-04, the county death rate was 22.2 per 100,000 for ages 1-4 (68 deaths total), 13.2 for ages 5-14 (95 deaths) and 41.8 for ages 15-24 (267 deaths).¹¹¹

Most child deaths are attributable to unintentional and intentional injuries, rather than to illness. Rates for deaths due to unintentional injuries, homicides and suicides all appear to have risen among 15- to 24-year-olds from 1999-2001 to 2002-2004 (see Figure 17).¹¹²

Figure 17. Santa Clara County Death Rate, Ages 15-24, by National Leading Causes



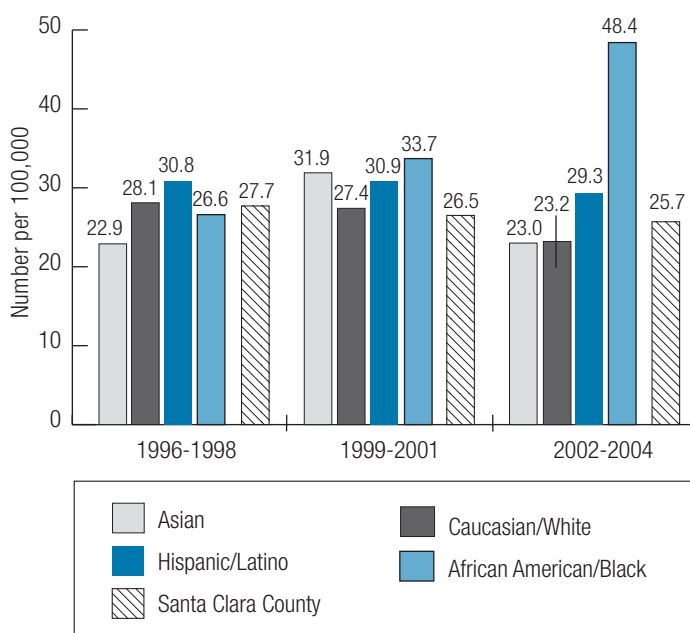
Source: California Department of Health Services, Center for Health Statistics, Vital Statistics Query System, <http://www.applications.dhs.ca.gov/vsq/default.asp>.

Note: In 2002-04, 82 deaths of 15- to 24-year-olds were due to unintentional injuries, 42 to homicides, 42 to suicides, 23 to cancer and nine to diseases of the heart.

Death rates vary across racial/ethnic groups (see Figure 18). Rates for African American/Black children and youth in Santa Clara County are two times higher than the rates for Caucasians/Whites and Asians (48.4 per 100,000 ages 1- 24 versus 23.2 and 23.0, respectively). The death rates for African American/Black children and youth also are

65% higher than for Hispanics/Latinos (29.3 per 100,000).¹¹³ The death rate for African American/Black children rose from 26.6 per 100,000 in 1996-98 to 48.4 in 2002-04. Note that the absolute number of African American/Black deaths in 2002-2004 was 23 (much fewer than the 137 deaths of Caucasian/White children and youths or the 163 deaths among Hispanics/Latinos),¹¹⁴ so it will be important to monitor these statistics closely to see if the trends and disparities continue. If they do, the disparities may be associated with differences across income levels, as children from low-income families and communities may be exposed to more hazards and crime.

Figure 18. Santa Clara County Child/Youth Death Rate, Ages 1-24, by Race/Ethnicity



Source: California Department of Health Services, Center for Health Statistics, Vital Statistics Query System, <http://www.applications.dhs.ca.gov/vsq/default.asp>.

Note: Of the 430 deaths of children and youth ages 1-24 in Santa Clara County during 2002-2004, 92 were Asians, 137 Caucasians/Whites, 163 Hispanics/Latinos and 23 African Americans/Blacks.