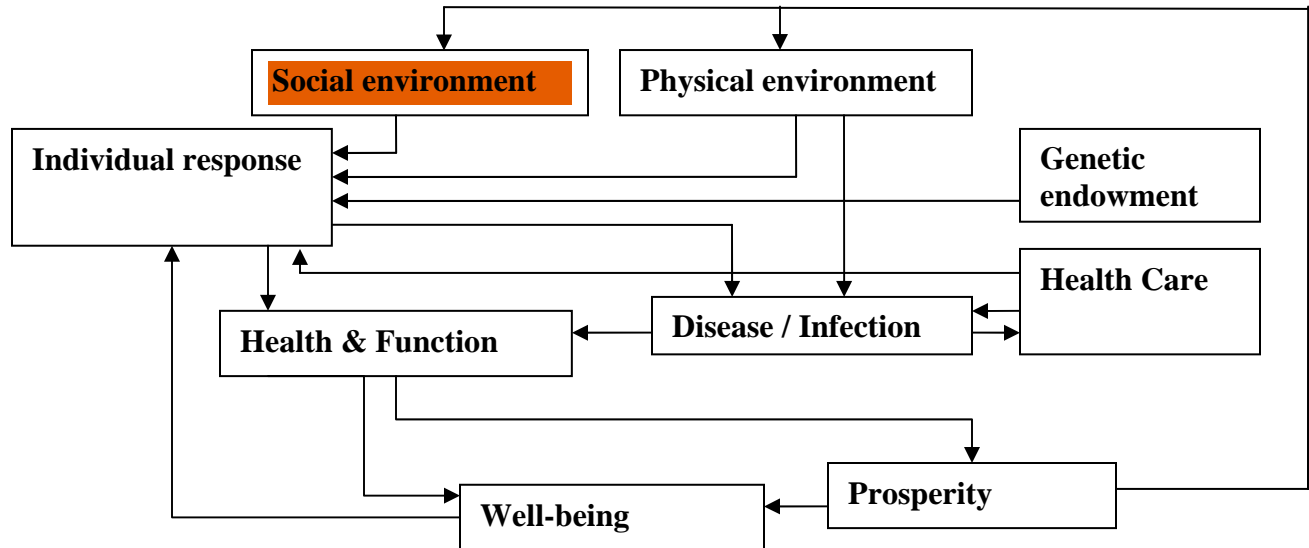


## Social environment

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### Key Findings

Key findings in the domain of the social environment were:

- The great diversity of Durham is reflected in the fact that Durham became a “Majority-Minority” County in 2005 – when Durham was 48.4% Caucasian, 37.2% African-American, 11% (approximately) Latino, 4% Asian, 8.4% other and 2% multi-racial.
- According to the 2005 census, 16.8% of Durham residents over five years old spoke a language other than English when at home.
- Durham has a higher rate of “non-family households” than all the comparison counties and NC as a whole.
- The number of cases of child abuse that were confirmed by the Department of Social Services has dropped from approximately 23 per 1,000 children in 2000 to 7 per 1,000 children in 2006.
- After dropping each year from 1997, Durham’s violent crime rate increased in 2006.
- In 2004–2005 there were 2,160 domestic violence hotline calls and 1,558 domestic violence clients in Durham County. 26% of the domestic violence clients were Caucasian, 46% were African-American, 20% were Latino, and 98% were women.
- Almost 46% of students in Durham’s schools qualified for free or reduced lunches in 2006, meaning that they live with families with low incomes.
- Participants in the listening sessions expressed concern about gang activity in several Durham neighborhoods.
- 72.5% of Durham’s overall population feels safe walking in their neighborhood during the day (compared only 45% of Latinos) and 42% of people in Durham feel

safe walking in their neighborhood during the night (compared with only 20% of Latinos).

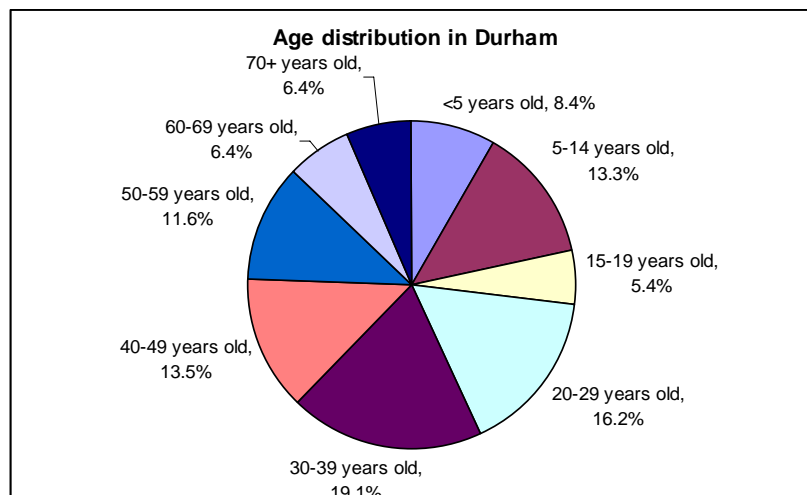
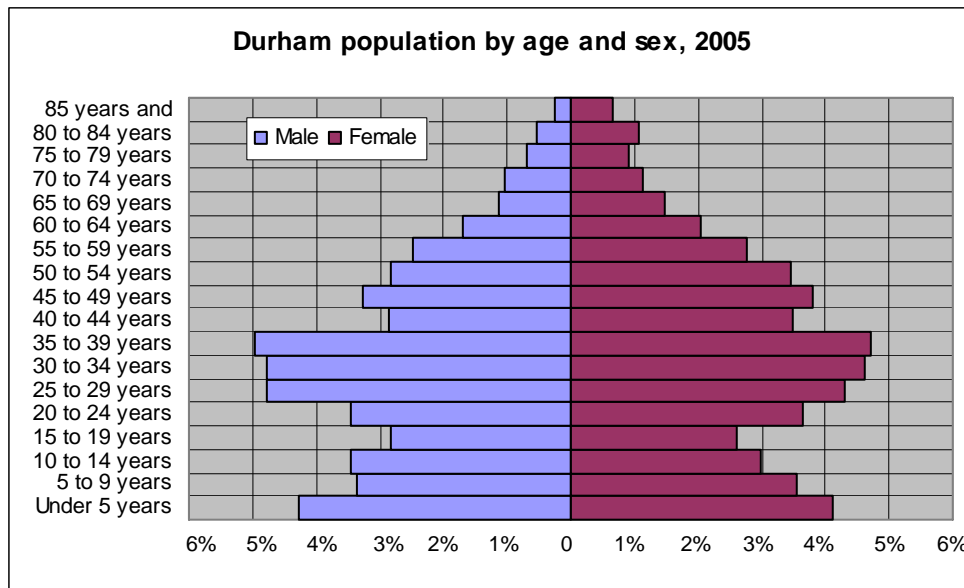
- The percentage of Caucasian students in Durham Public Middle Schools and High Schools who reported in 2007 that a parent or family member has talked with them about sex was less than for other students – and Caucasian students who have engaged in sexual activity reported lower rates of condom use than other students.

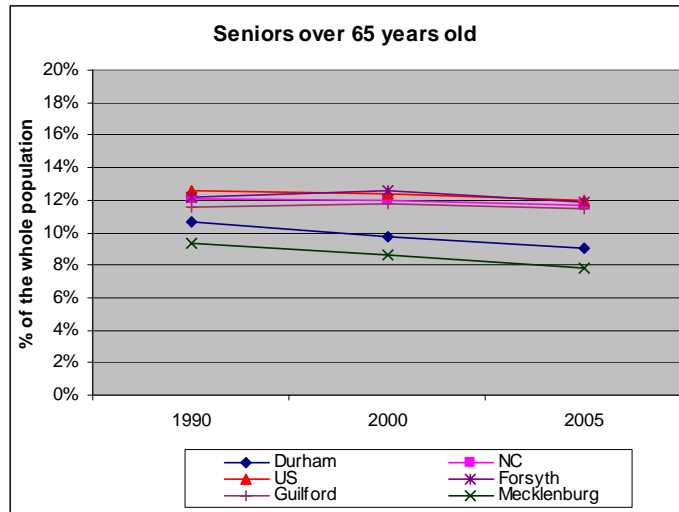
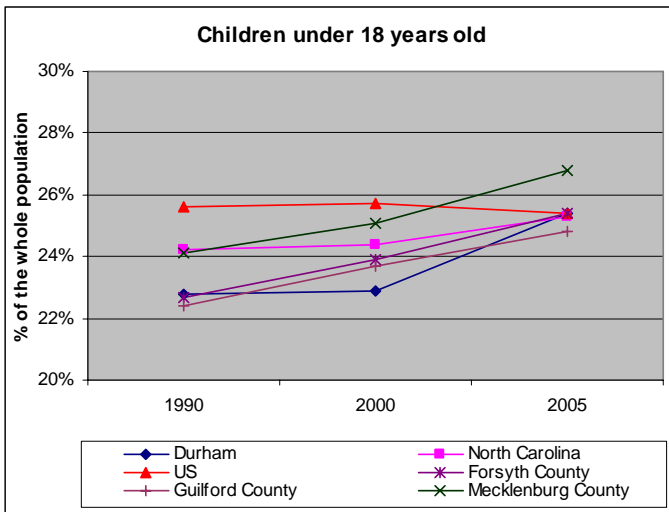
## Demographics

What do the social environments in Durham look like? One way to look at communities is through their basic demographics.

### Age and sex

The Census shows that the largest age group in Durham for both men and women is 35-39 year olds. According to the 2005 Census, 25.4% of Durham is under 18 years old, and 9% are seniors over 65 years old.

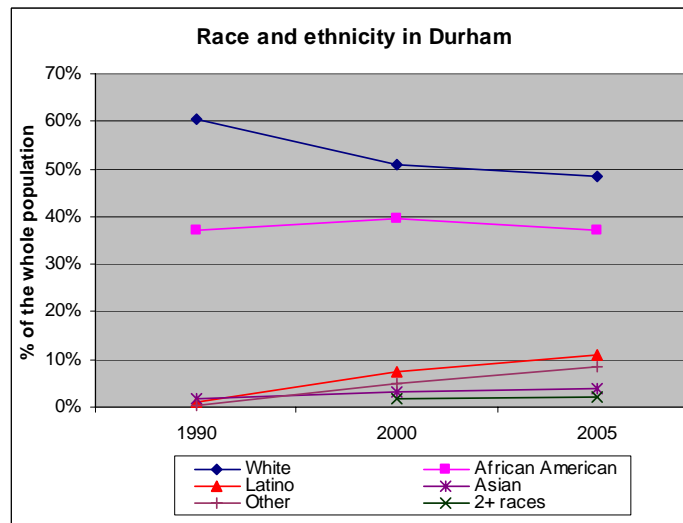




Data source: US Census, [www.census.gov](http://www.census.gov)

### Race / ethnicity

Durham is highly diverse racially and ethnically. In 2005, it became a “Majority-Minority” county, or one in which more than 50% of the county is considered “minority.” That year, Durham was 48.4% Caucasian, 37.2% African American, 11% Latino (although this is based on a low sample number and may not be reliable), 4% Asian, 8.4% “other,” and 2% multi-racial.



Data source: US Census, [www.census.gov](http://www.census.gov)

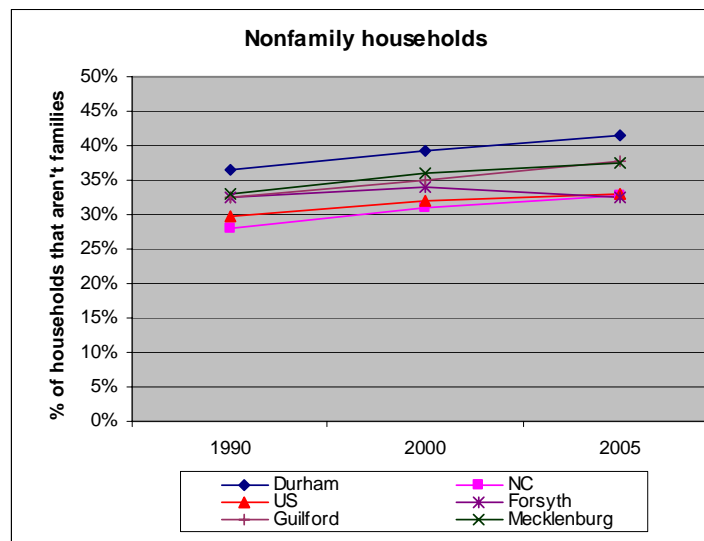
According to the 2005 Census projection, 16.8% of Durham County residents over the age of five spoke a language other than English at home; of these, 68% were Spanish speakers. In 2006, the Census found that 13.9% of Durham was foreign-born, of whom 79.7% are not naturalized citizens.

“Race relations” was a theme of the study of Lincoln Community Health Center’s patient population.

“Many community members felt that members of these minority groups often have fewer resources available to them than others and can find themselves competing for those scarce resources. Many African Americans felt as if the neighborhoods, jobs, and other resources historically serving them were being used more and more by Hispanics. One community member said: ‘Why don’t they have their own doctors?’ On the other hand, many Hispanics feel unwelcome by African-Americans and believe that they are targeted for crime and other negative feelings simply because they are Hispanic. ‘My husband and others and I have come to the conclusion that many black people think that we come here to take the opportunities for jobs that they have,’ an interviewee said... Most long-time Durham residents said the racial and ethnic composition of the county had changed, specifically noting the growth of the Hispanic presence in the county and their use of resources more traditionally utilized by African Americans... Both community members and service providers were divided. Many suggested that the groups in Durham ‘get along fine,’ citing increased intermarriage and interaction at schools, churches, and other locations. Many interviewees felt that tensions did exist and told of specific incidences of negative interactions and sentiments that occurred in the community” (pp 31-32).

## Households

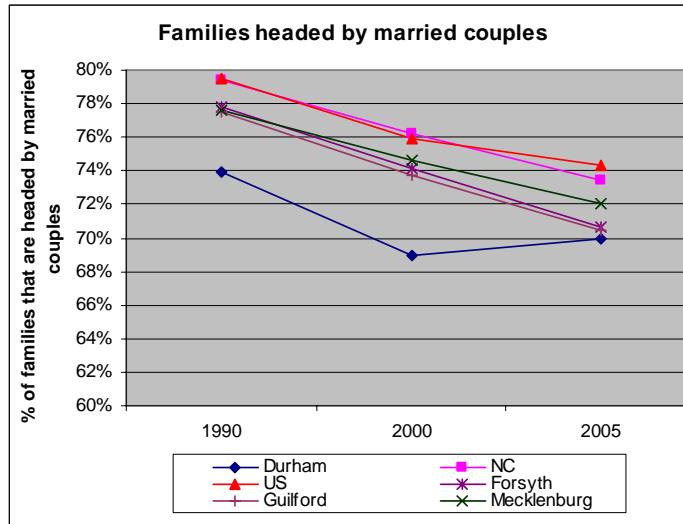
Not all people live with their families, which is why the Census counts households as well as families. In 2005, Durham had 99,196 households, with an average of 2.3 persons per household. Of these households, 28.3% had children, 40.8% were headed by married couples, 4% by male householders and 13.8% by female householders. 41.4% of households were not families, meaning that they were persons living alone or with non-relatives. 4.3% of Durham’s households were headed by unmarried partners – 3.5% opposite sex couples and 0.8% same sex couples. The high rate of non-family households in Durham is likely due to, among other things, young people coming to the universities in Durham, and single people recruited to work in local industries.



Data source: US Census, [www.census.gov](http://www.census.gov)

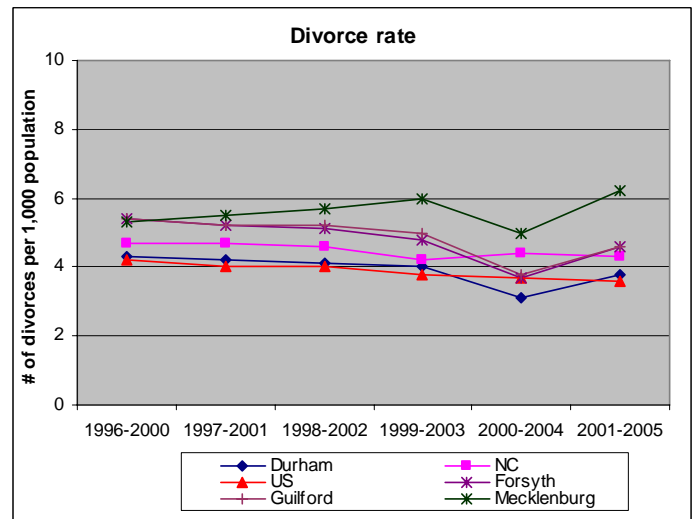
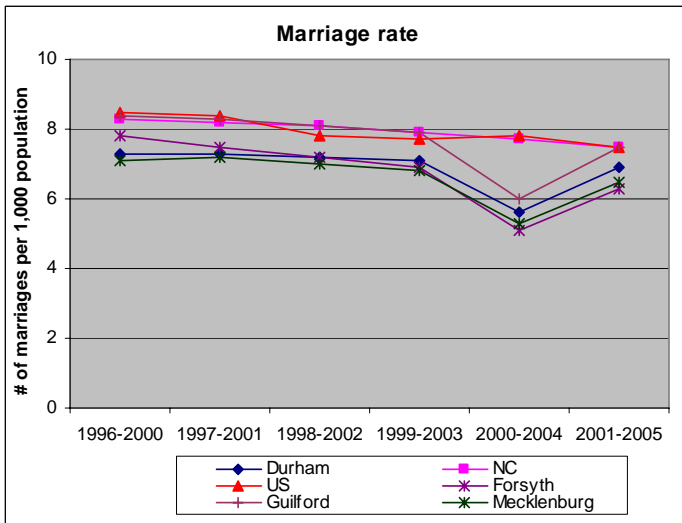
## Families

In 2005, according to the Census projection, Durham had over 58,000 families, with an average family size of 3.11 people. 70% of these families are married couples, 6.8% have a male householder with no wife present, and 23.5% have a female householder with no husband present.



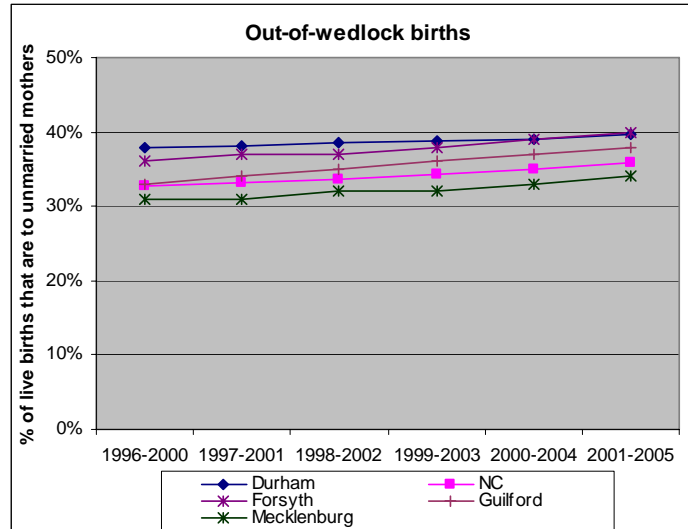
Data source: US Census, [www.census.gov](http://www.census.gov)

NC’s vital statistics provides information on marriage and divorce rates. From 2001-2005, Durham’s marriage rate was 6.9% (# of marriages per 1,000 people); the divorce rate was 3.8 (# of divorces per 1,000 people). During that time period, the number of births to women who weren’t married (“out of wedlock births”) was 39.7% of live births.



“Talking about it. Everything that has to do with health. My parents, they really don’t talk about health stuff with me, so I think it’d be good to come up to me. I want to sit down with my parents and talk about stuff that they don’t want to talk about.”

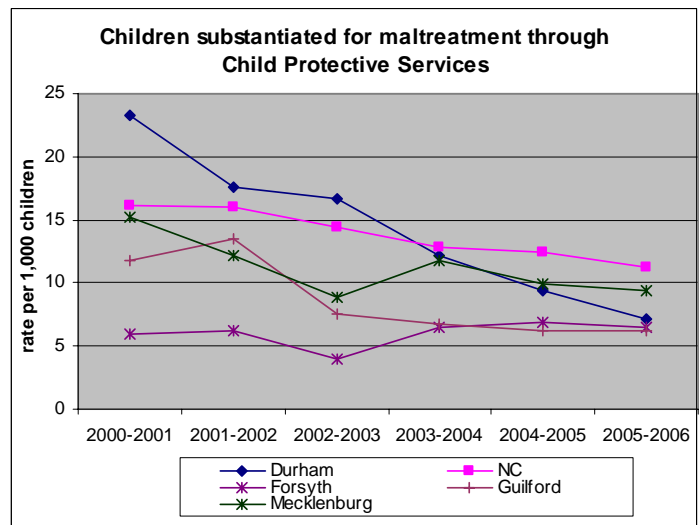
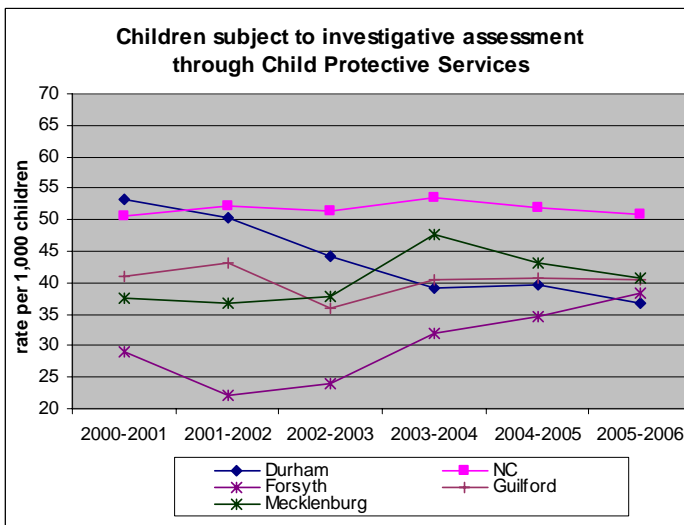
- Durham County resident

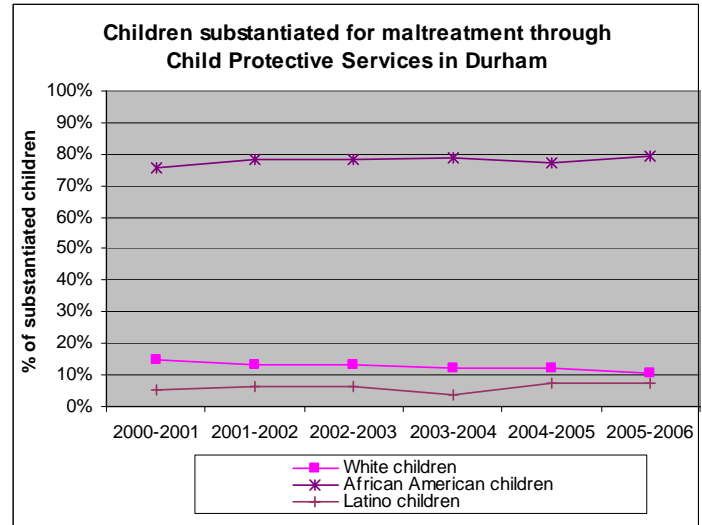
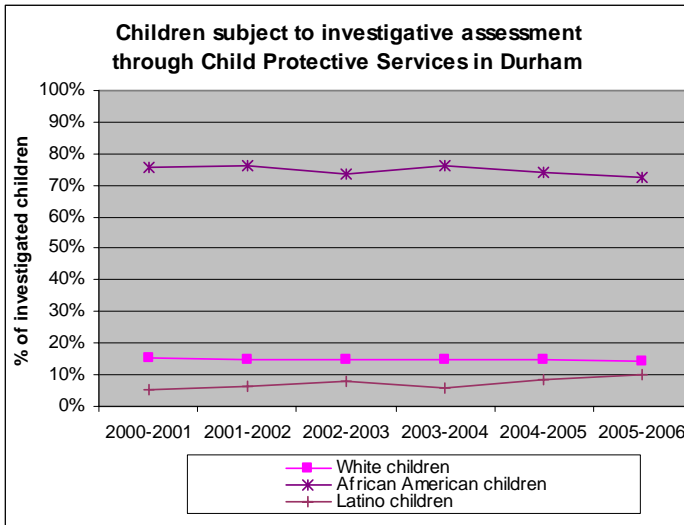


Data source: NC State Center for Health Statistics, Vital Statistics, <http://www.schs.state.nc.us/SCHS/data/vitalstats.cfm>, National Center for Health Statistics, National Vital Statistics System, <http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/nversuss.htm>

\* Note: The US marriage and divorce rates are for the years 2000, 2001, 2002, 2003, 2004, 2005, use for general reference only.

Child Protective Services, a program of the Department of Social Services, intervenes with families when child maltreatment is suspected. In 2005-2006, they investigated 2,207 children, and substantiated that 428 were maltreated by their families. Of the maltreated children, 79.2% were African American, 10.5% Caucasian, and 7.2% Latino.





Data source: NC Dept of Social Services, Child Welfare Central Registry Data, <http://www.dhhs.state.nc.us/dss/stats/cr.htm>

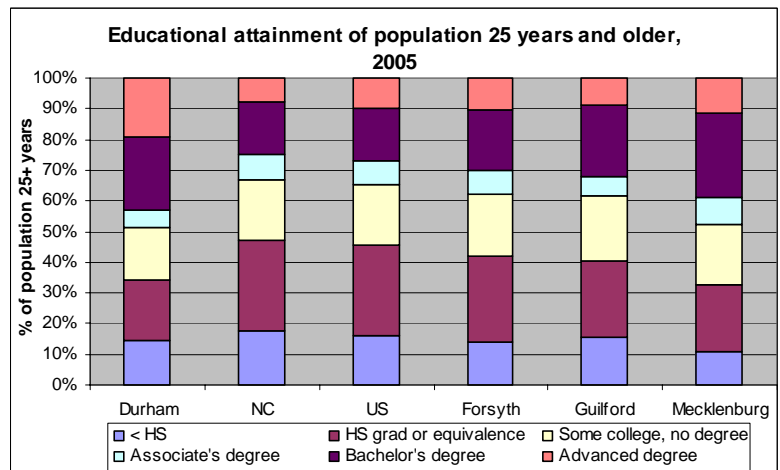
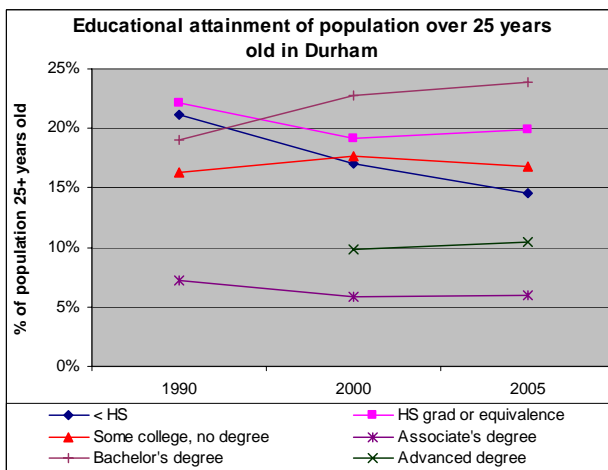
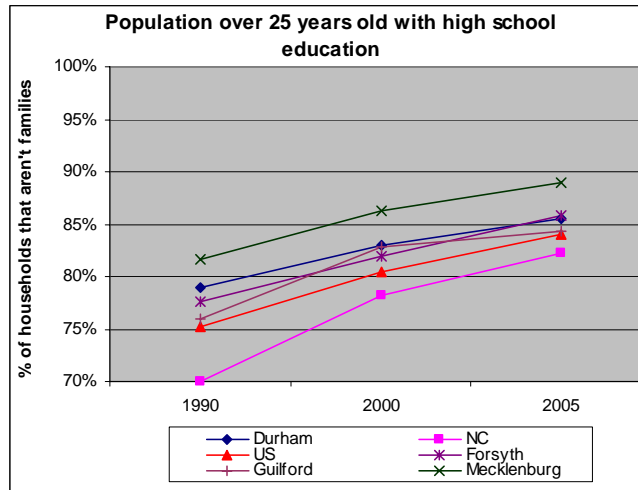
In 2007, 2% of those responding to the Durham County Health Assessment survey said that their household had problems that led people to threaten, hit or push in the past four weeks. In 2003, that figure was 4%. Extrapolating from census data, this suggests that approximately 1,160 families in Durham County have had problems in the past month that led to some form of violence. According to the NC Coalition Against Domestic Violence ([www.nccadv.org](http://www.nccadv.org)), ten women in Durham have been murdered in domestic violence situations since 2003. In 2004-2005, there were 2,160 domestic violence hotline calls and 1,558 domestic violence clients from Durham. Of these 1,558, 26% were Caucasian, 46% African American, 20% Latino, and 98% women. Half were over the age of 45 years old, 22% 34-44 years old, 12% under the age of 25. According to the Durham Police Department, they investigated 1,935 domestic violence cases in 2004 and 1,858 in 2005, and there were children present in 9% of those cases (Substance Use and Abuse Durham County, 2007, [www.healthydurham.org](http://www.healthydurham.org)).

## Education

Durham is a well-educated county, and places a value on education. 85.5% of Durham residents over 25 years old have at least a high school education; 23.9% have a Bachelor’s degree, and 19.1% have an advanced degree (Master’s, Doctorate, or professional).

“The biggest barrier to employment is education. And all the tests, in most places, even for fast foods, you have to take it on a computer, so literacy is the biggest barrier to job employment and next to that is the criminal background.”

- Durham County resident



Data source: US Census, [www.census.gov](http://www.census.gov)

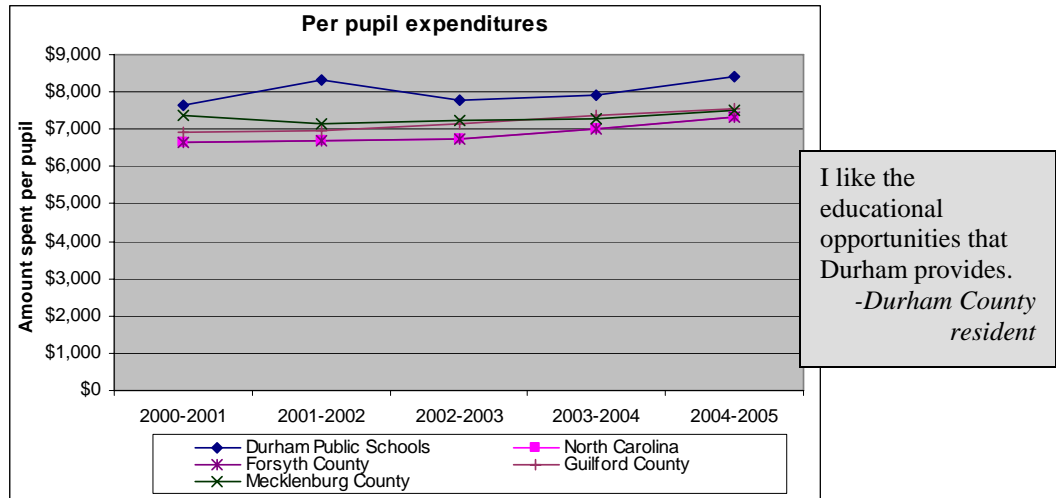
\* Note – “Advanced degree” includes masters’ degrees, professional degrees, and doctorates

It’s fortunate to have such a high level of education, as the Census clearly shows the economic benefits to persons with higher levels of education.

Durham population 25 years and older	% living in poverty	Median earnings
< HS graduate	19.6%	\$17,347
HS graduate or equivalency	11.5%	\$25,351
Some college or associate’s degree	8.3%	\$28,873
Bachelor’s degree	5.5%	\$40,392
Graduate or professional degree	2.1%	\$52,205

Durham Public Schools is the seventh largest school system in North Carolina, with almost 32,000 students and 2,300 teachers at its 46 schools. Of the student population, 54% are African American, 24.3% are Caucasian, and 15.7% are Latino. Almost 46% of students qualified for free or reduced lunches in 2006, meaning they live in families with low incomes ([www.dpsnc.net](http://www.dpsnc.net)).

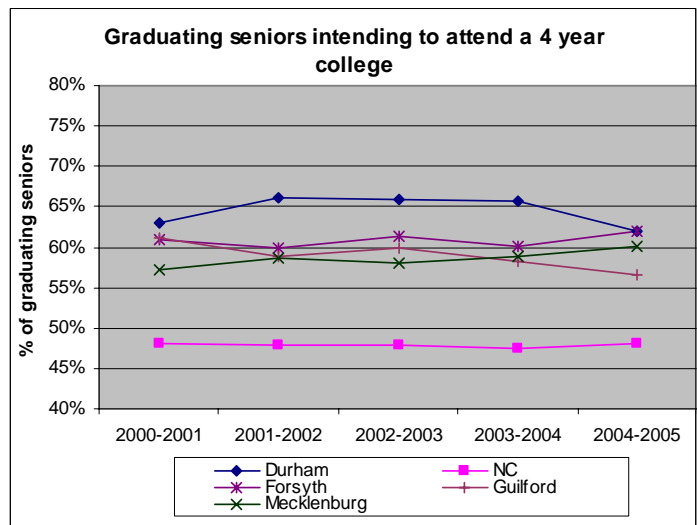
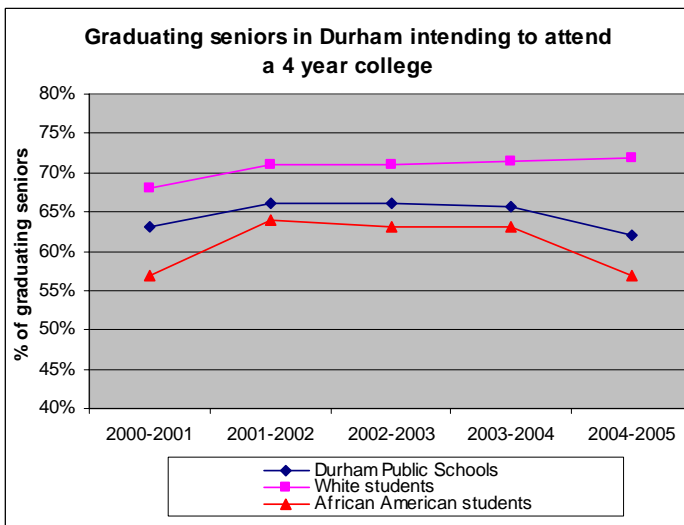
Durham County spends more per student than the North Carolina average, ranking 29<sup>th</sup> in the state (115 school systems) for financial commitment to public schools in 2004-2005, when the per pupil expenditure was \$8,415.



I like the educational opportunities that Durham provides.  
 -Durham County resident

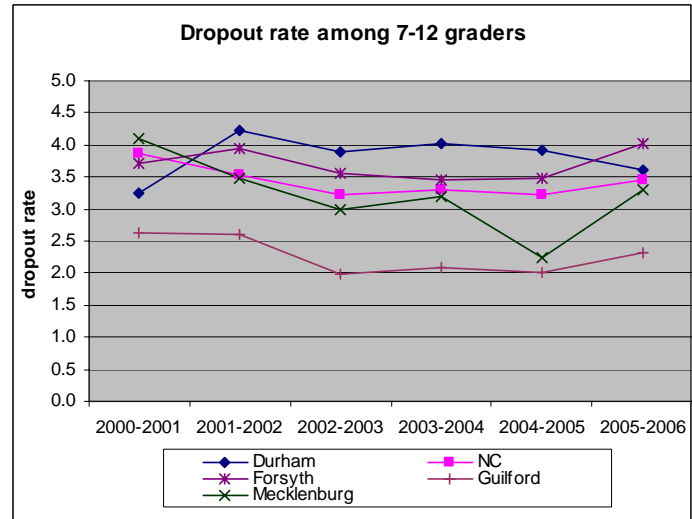
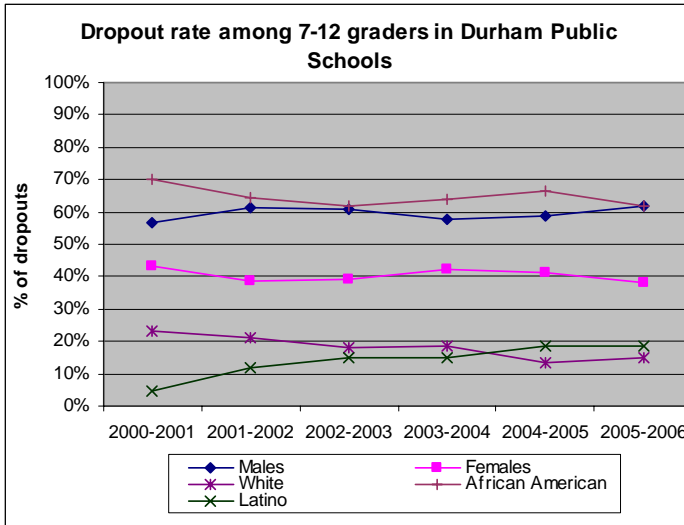
Data source: NC Department of Public Instruction, <http://www.ncpublicschools.org/fbs/resources/data/>

A large percentage (62%) of seniors at Durham Public Schools' high schools expect to pursue a four year degree, either in North Carolina or elsewhere, after they graduate, including 71.9% of Caucasian students and 56.8% of African American students.



Data source: NC Department of Public Instruction, <http://www.ncpublicschools.org/fbs/resources/data/>

The dropout rate among 7-12 graders at Durham Public schools was 3.6%. Of dropouts, 61.7% were males, 62.1% African American, 18.7% Latinos, and 15.1% Caucasians.



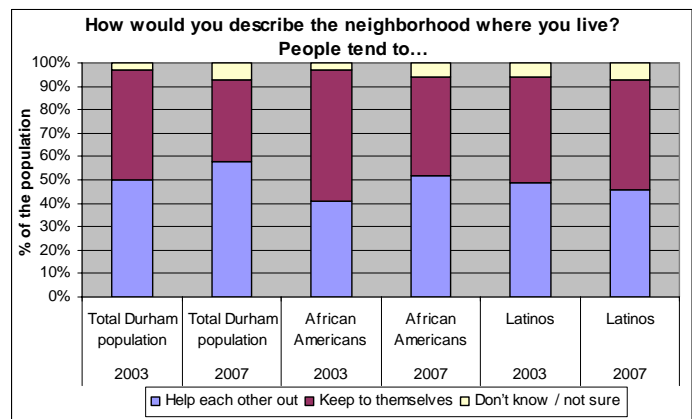
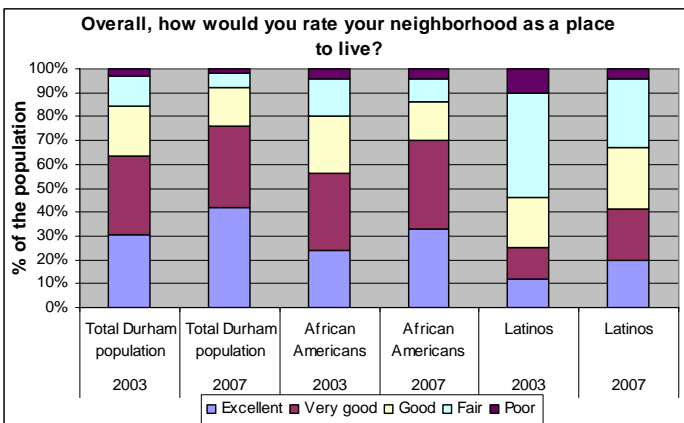
Data source: NC Department of Public Instruction, <http://www.ncpublicschools.org/fbs/resources/data/>

Education was also a main theme of the “action oriented community assessment” of Lincoln Community Health Center’s patient population.

“In comparison to health, employment, and other issues, education does not rank high in priority for most community members... Community members conveyed that it is hard to value an education when they spend the majority of their time working multiple jobs just to make enough money. Yet this presents a problem because without an education, job opportunities are limited and wages run low. There appears to be a need to educate community members about various community resources. Low literacy levels and the inability to navigate the healthcare and school systems corroborate this idea of a lack of education within the community as a predominant issue” (p 29).

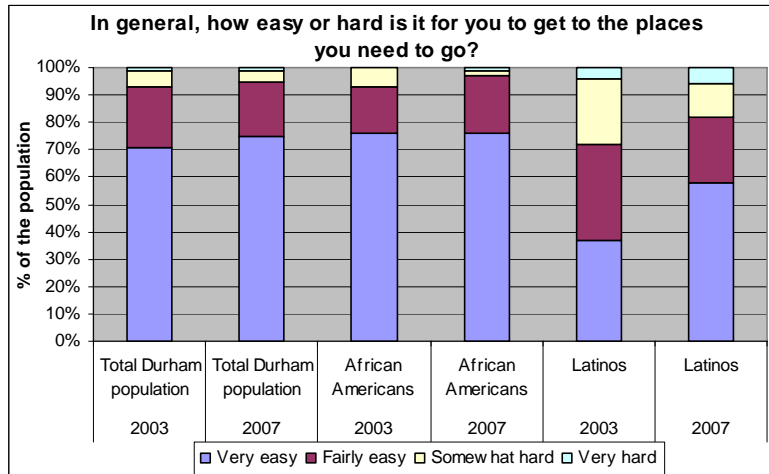
## Neighborhoods

Durham is a county of neighborhoods. In 2006, the Durham Results-Based Accountability workgroup on neighborhoods counted 167 organized, active neighborhood associations ([www.durhamnc.gov/rba](http://www.durhamnc.gov/rba)). In 2007, 42% of Durham residents participating in the Durham County Health Assessment survey said that their neighborhood was an excellent place to live; 34% said it was “very good.” 58% said that people in the neighborhood tend to help each other out.



Data source: Durham Health Assessment Survey

Transportation is a key aspect of neighborhoods and the social environment. In the Durham County Health Assessment survey, 75% said that it was “very easy” for them to get around.



I lived in a big city before I lived in Durham, and it was always really loud. Durham's much quieter by comparison. I know more about the people around me than I did.  
 - Durham County resident

Data source: Durham Health Assessment Survey

Transportation was also a theme in the study of Lincoln Community Health Center's patient population.

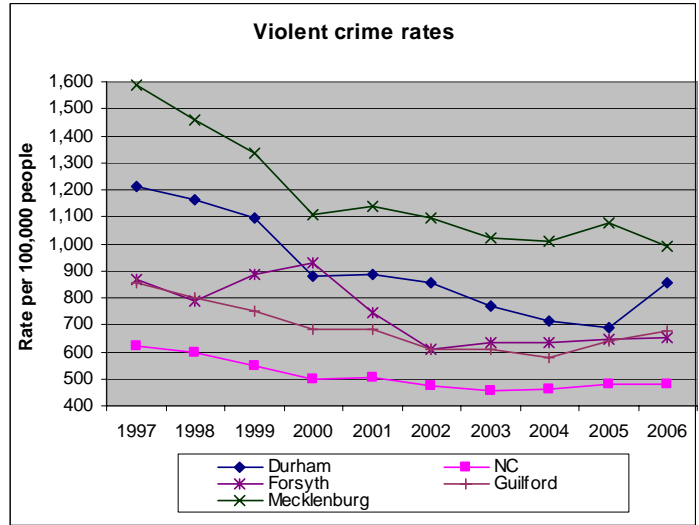
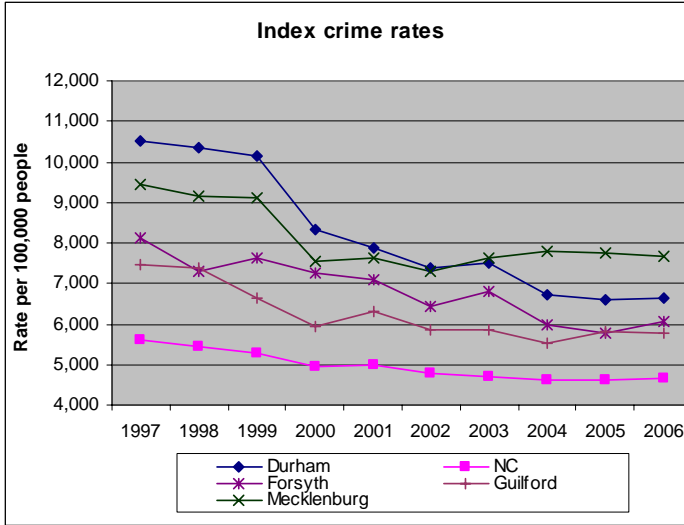
“Community members almost unanimously reported that transportation was a huge issue in their communities, while service providers did not emphasize it nearly as much. Both groups praised Durham's public transportation as a valuable resource for community members without other options. Limited incomes prevent many in the community from buying cars, leaving public transportation and walking as the only alternatives. The issue of safety arose with both these methods of transportation, with many community members citing worries of being shot in crossfire while walking or being robbed on the buses, in the main bus terminal, or at a poorly-lit bus stop. In addition, many felt that buses ran too infrequently and that bus stops were inconveniently located, limiting their options for employment and ability to reach other locations. As one community member put it, ‘Most people don't have transportation to the grocery store’” (p 34).

## Crime

Crime was also a main theme in the 2006-2007 study of Lincoln Community Health Center's patient population.

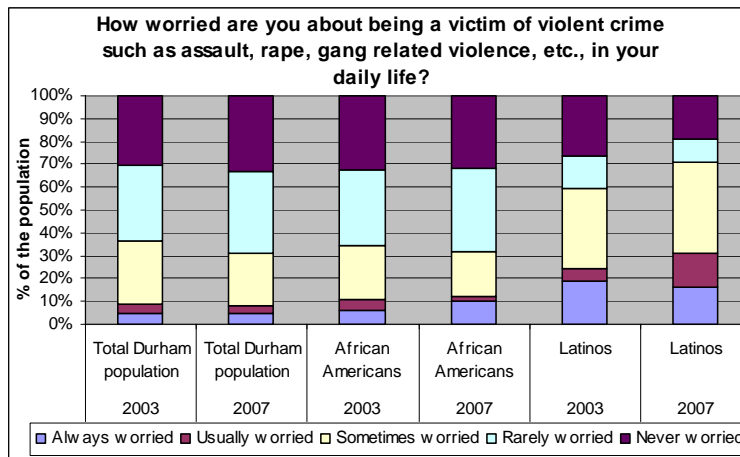
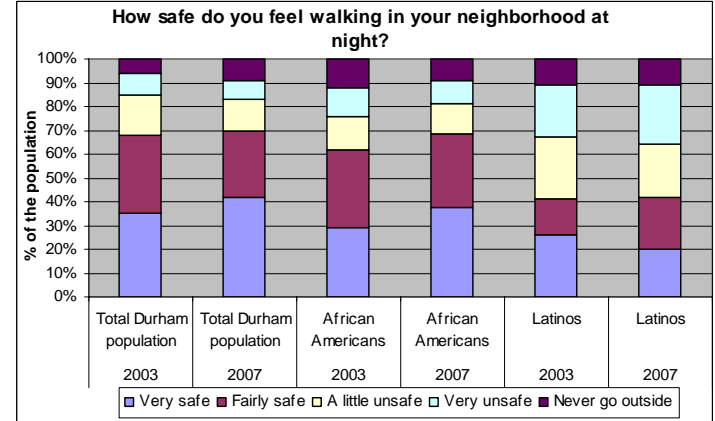
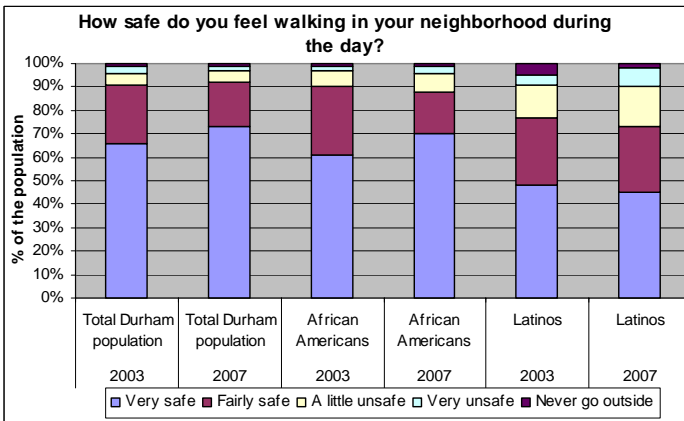
“Over one half of community members interviewed agreed that crime and safety were major problems in their community. Our interviewees told us of the many ways in which crime and fear for their safety affect their everyday lives. Gang violence, racially motivated crime, transportation safety, and feeling concerned for the safety of their children were main points of concern. A few felt that owning a gun was necessary for peace of mind. Some were scared to take the bus. Others thought it too unsafe to walk to the grocery store or even leave their houses. Still others felt they could not escape it, even inside their own homes and neighborhoods. ‘We [go] back to crime ... everything goes back to crime...’ one community member said” (p 26).

The North Carolina Uniform Crime Reporting system gives data on crimes in each county. In 2006, the index crime rate (total number of murders, rapes, robberies, aggravated assaults, burglaries, larcenies and motor vehicle thefts) was 6,640.5 per 100,000 people. That same year, the violent crime rate (murder, rape, robbery, and aggravated assault) rose slightly to 855.4 per 100,000 people. Both rates in Durham have fallen significantly over the past ten years.



Data source: NC Department of Justice, SBI, <http://sbi2.jus.state.nc.us/crp/public/Default.htm>

In the Durham County Health Assessment survey, 73% of Durham residents said they felt “very safe” walking in their neighborhood during the day, and 19% felt “fairly safe.” Only 42% felt “very safe” at night, with 28% feeling “fairly safe.” 33% said they were “never worried” about being a victim of violent crime, and 36% said they were “rarely worried.”



Data source: Durham County Health Assessment survey

“We’re right in the middle of gang violence. If you’ve ever seen ‘Welcome to Durham’ we’re in it.”

“A lot of gang members. Not on my street, but on the next street over. It’s a whole bunch of gang members over there. They shoot guns, and there’s little kids out there, and that’s bad.”

-Durham County residents

“I think the crime issue is overblown by the media.”

“Durham has a bad reputation.”

“I think it’s safer here than anywhere else.”

“We have a bad reputation for crime and poor schools, which is undeserved.”

-Durham County residents

According to the Durham County Health Assessment survey, 20% of Durham County residents keep firearms in their homes. Of those 20%, 33% say the firearms are for sport / hunting, and 44% say they are for protection reasons; 20% of those with firearms keep them unlocked and loaded. These figures are largely unchanged from 2003, except that in 2003 only 29% of firearms owners kept them in their home for protection reasons.

Latinos are much less likely to have firearms in their homes – only 4% do, and of them, 75% say they are for home protection and 20% leave them loaded and unlocked. Of African Americans, 12% have firearms in their homes. They are mostly (76%) for home protection.

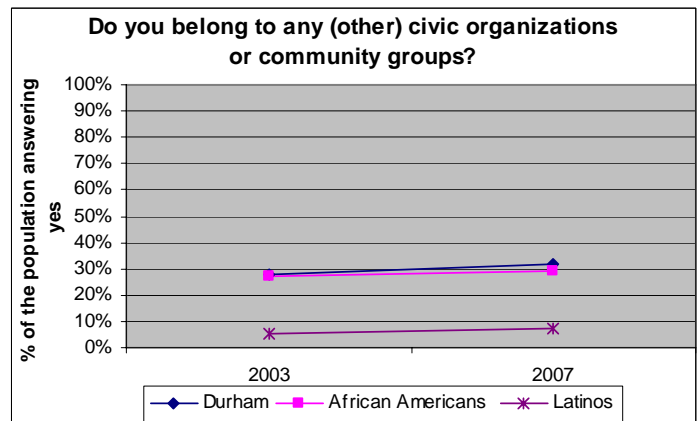
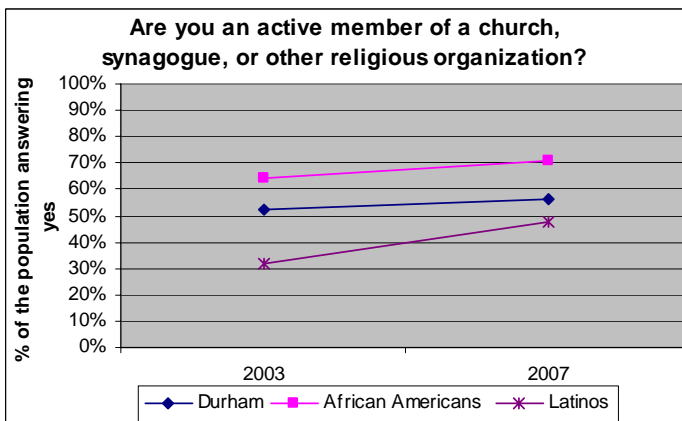
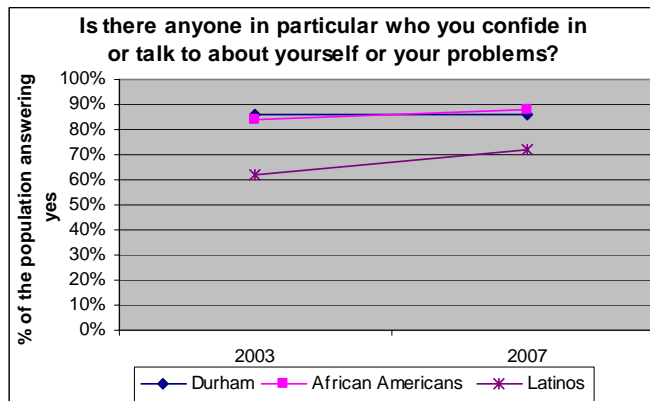
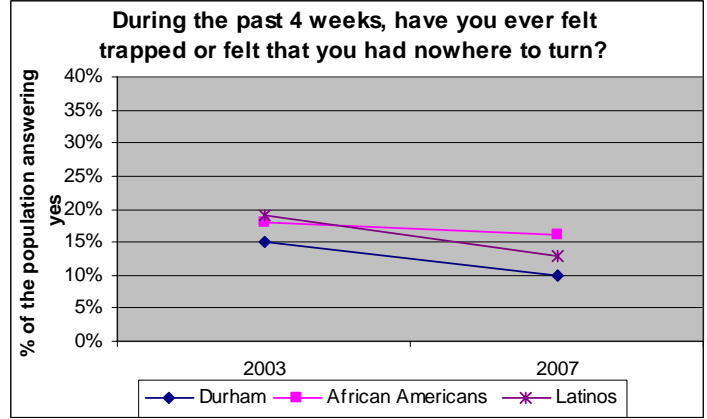
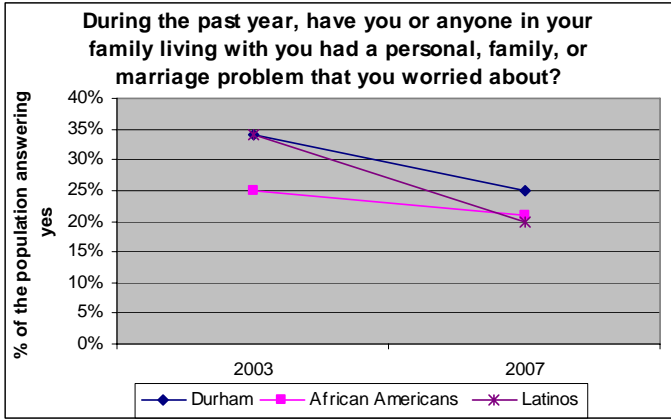
In 2004, the NC BRFSS also asked about the presence of firearms in the house. Durham had a low rate of firearms ownership, at 22.1%. Of these, 29.2% (n=23) people said their firearms were loaded, and of those, twelve people also kept their firearms unlocked.

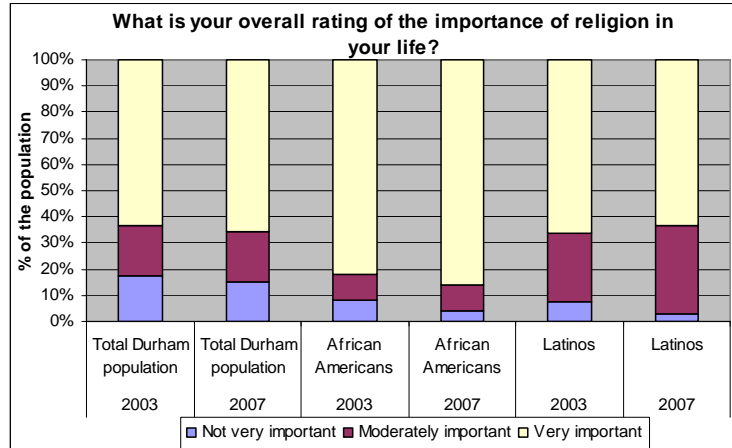
Population that keeps firearms in their home	
Durham	22.1%
NC	40.9%
Forsyth	35.2%
Guilford	35.6%
Mecklenburg	25.4%

Data source: NC Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System ([www.schs.state.nc.us/SCHS/brfss](http://www.schs.state.nc.us/SCHS/brfss))

## **Social support**

Social support can be critical to helping people maintain good health. For example, the Durham County Health Assessment survey found that people who attend church have higher mental health scores on the aforementioned mental health scale (MCS) than do those who don’t attend church. According to the questions about social support in this year’s survey, Durham residents have better indicators of social support than in 2003: 26% were worried about a personal problem of theirs or their family’s in the past year; 10% said they felt trapped and had nowhere to turn in the past month; 86% have someone to confide their problems in; 56% are members of a religious organization and 32% are engaged in a civic or community group.

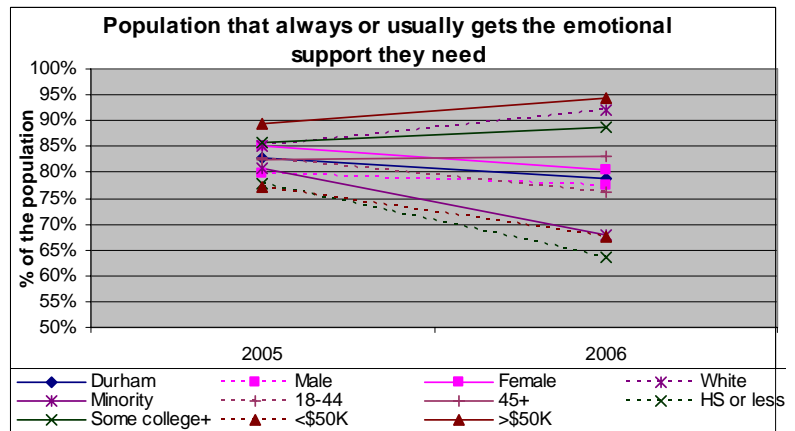
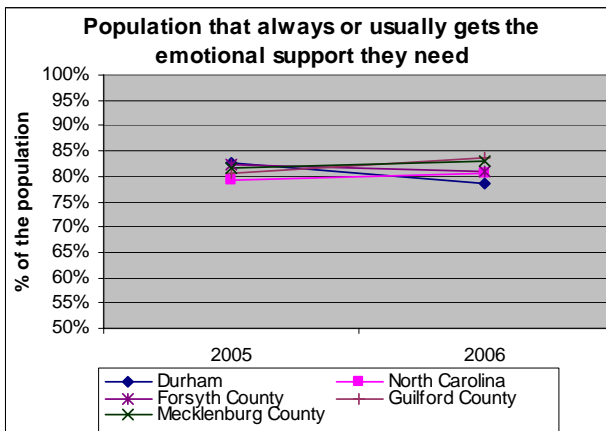




Data source: Durham County Health Assessment survey

“You get somebody that people trust. Especially black women, we trust that person that does our hair.”  
- Durham County resident

The BRFSS also asked about social support, finding that in 2006, 78.7% of Durham said that they “always” or “usually” get the emotional support they need.



Data source: NC Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System ([www.schs.state.nc.us/SCHS/brfss](http://www.schs.state.nc.us/SCHS/brfss))

## Schools

The Youth Risk Behavior Survey of students in Durham Public Schools found some preliminary data about the social environments of schools.<sup>1</sup>

- Girls in Middle Schools were much more likely to have been taught about sexual abstinence than boys in Middle Schools.
- Females in Middle Schools generally reported higher school grades and lower proclivity to violent behavior or carrying weapons than boys in Middle Schools. They did report a slightly higher instance of drinking in the past 30 days (20.4%

<sup>1</sup> YRBS results presented here are preliminary. The final Report on the 2007 YRBS in Durham Public Schools will be available in December 2007.

- vs. 16.9%) than boys in Middle Schools
- Female students in High Schools generally reported higher levels of being harassed, bullied, or teased at school as male students in High Schools. More than twice as many girls as boys reported feelings of depression and thoughts of suicide.
  - African Americans in Middle Schools reported fewer incidences of being harassed or bullied at school and lower rates of having used cocaine powder or crack cocaine than other students in Middle Schools (2.2% vs. 6.1%). These same students also reported higher instances of having been taught about sexual abstinence and the dangers of HIV, AIDS, and other STDs.
  - African American students in High Schools also reported higher instances of having spoken with a parent or adult family member about sex. Among these students who are sexually active, a higher percentage reported using condoms than other students who are sexually active.
  - African Americans in Middle Schools reported fewer cases of being offered drugs at school. However, African Americans in High Schools reported fewer cases of being offered drugs at school than other students in High Schools (in Durham Public Schools).
  - Boys in Middle Schools reported much higher levels of physical violence or being victims of vandalism, and slightly higher smoking rates than females in Middle Schools. Also, boys in High Schools reported much higher levels of physical violence and carrying weapons, higher levels of sexual activity, higher levels of marijuana use, and lower levels having talked with a parent or adult family member about sex.
  - Latino students in both Middle and High Schools reported fewer incidences of getting into fights.
  - 37.7% of Caucasian students in Middle Schools reporting having been harassed or bullied at school in the past 12 months. This compares to 25.6% of other students in Middle Schools.
  - While fewer Caucasian students in High Schools were sexually active, among those who are condom use was lower than that found among other students in High Schools. Additionally, a lower than average number of Caucasian students in High Schools said a parent or adult family member had spoken to them about sex.

## **Discussion**

What do these factors have to do with health? The authors of the model of health determinants on which this assessment is based started with a simpler model: health and healthcare. As they delved deeper into a more complex depiction of the influences on a population's health, they expanded it to include individual choice, or behavior. They then found that people's individual choices, and indeed perhaps even biological stamina, are influenced by their social environment. Choices, such as smoking, can be socially conditioned. The "psychological dynamics of status and class" have both powerful and subtle effects (p 50). They note,

"Moreover, the gradients in mortality and morbidity across socio-economic classes appear to be relatively stable over long periods of time, even though the principal causes of death have changed

considerably. *This implies that there are underlying factors that influence susceptibility to a whole range of diseases.* They are general rather than specific risk factors. Whatever is going around, people in lower social positions tend to get more of it, and to die earlier – even after adjustment for the effects of specific individual or environmental hazards (Marmot, Shipley, and Rose, 1984)” (p 46) (emphasis theirs).

For this reason, things like race, education, family structure and function, neighborhood quality, and social support are included in a county health assessment. Throughout the assessment, the reader will note racial and ethnic differences in disease rates and other indicators. The same is true for levels of education and income. As researchers and health practitioners try to solve long-standing problems such as infant mortality, they find that despite adequate healthcare, nutrition, etc, it may be something as vague and hard to quantify as stress that is highly associated with the outcome.

Durham comes through in this health assessment as a place of good social environments, with a high number of young, well-educated, professional people, a highly diverse racial and ethnic composition, decreasing crime, highly engaged neighborhoods, and strong social support among its residents. However, income and status disparities exist in Durham, and many have not been able to fully participate in the economic expansion that Durham has enjoyed (largely because of its focus on the high technology and knowledge economy). This has lead many to comment that there are truly “Two Durhams” – one of wealth, status, and education, and the other struggling to maintain their livelihoods and health (for more on this, see the “Prosperity” chapter of this assessment).

## ***Initiatives and Resources in Durham***

### *Seniors and children*

- Children’s Workgroup of Durham’s City & County “**Results-Based Accountability**” initiative – a partnership of public sector and community efforts working towards measurable accomplishments in helping children to be ready for a succeed in school. [www.durhamnc.gov/rba](http://www.durhamnc.gov/rba)
- **Durham’s Partnership for Children** works to ensure all children arrive at school healthy and ready to succeed, through administering child development programs for children ages birth to five years old. [www.dpfc.net](http://www.dpfc.net), 403-6960.
- **Durham’s Council for Senior Citizens** promotes the highest level of well-being for older adults, including social and senior center services, nutrition and adult day health services. [www.councilseniorcitizens.org](http://www.councilseniorcitizens.org), 688-8247.

### *Race / ethnicity groups*

- **El Centro Hispano** is a community based organization dedicated to strengthening the Latino community and improving the quality of life of Latino residents in Durham. [www.elcentronc.org](http://www.elcentronc.org), 687-4635.

### *Domestic / family violence prevention and intervention*

- **Durham Department of Social Services** – administers programs for eligible low-income families, such as food stamps, Medicaid, temporary or emergency financial assistance, and child care. [www.durhamcountync.gov/departments/dssv/](http://www.durhamcountync.gov/departments/dssv/), 560-8000.

- The **Durham Crisis Response Center** works with the community to end domestic and sexual violence through advocacy, education, support and prevention. [www.durhamcrisisresponse.org](http://www.durhamcrisisresponse.org), 403-9425.
- The **NC Coalition Against Domestic Violence** (headquartered in Durham) seeks to create social change through the elimination of the institutional, cultural, and individual oppressions that contribute to domestic violence. [www.nccadv.org](http://www.nccadv.org), 956-9124.

#### *Education*

- **Durham Public Schools** is the public school system for Durham County. [www.dpsnc.net](http://www.dpsnc.net), 560-2000.
- **Durham Technical Community College** provide postsecondary education that prepares students for careers in vocational and technical fields, the first two years of a baccalaureate degree to prepare students for professional careers, basic skills and general education programs that enable students to live productive lives, and skills development courses that meet workforce training needs of the residents and employers of Durham and Orange counties. [www.durhamtech.edu](http://www.durhamtech.edu), 686-3300.
- The **Durham Literacy Center** (DLC) works to assist Durham County adults achieve personal goals and experience positive life change through increased literacy, including computer literacy and English as a Second Language. [www.durhamliteracy.org](http://www.durhamliteracy.org), 489-8383.
- **North Carolina Central University** is a historically black university in Durham, with bachelors' degrees in 100 fields and graduate degrees in 40 disciplines. [www.nccu.edu](http://www.nccu.edu), 530-6100.
- **Duke University** is a large research university located in Durham, with nine schools, including Duke Medical School. [www.duke.edu](http://www.duke.edu), 684-8411.

#### *Crime and safety*

- Safety Workgroup of Durham's City & County "**Results-Based Accountability**" initiative – a partnership of public sector and community efforts working towards measurable accomplishments in ensuring that all residents are safe in Durham. [www.durhamnc.gov/rba](http://www.durhamnc.gov/rba)
- **Durham's Partners Against Crime** program promotes collaboration among police officers, Durham residents, and city and county government officials to find sustainable solutions to community crime problems and quality of life issues. <http://www.durhampolice.com/pac/>, 560-4322.

#### *Neighborhoods*

- Neighborhoods Workgroup of Durham's City & County "**Results-Based Accountability**" initiative – a partnership of public sector and community efforts working towards measurable accomplishments towards all Durham citizens enjoying sustainable thriving neighborhoods with efficient and well-maintained infrastructure. [www.durhamnc.gov/rba](http://www.durhamnc.gov/rba)
- **Durham's Inter-Neighborhood Council** works to increase the influence of neighborhoods by speaking in a unified voice on issues on which the membership reaches consensus. [www.durhaminc.org](http://www.durhaminc.org).