

# Building strong families, individuals, children and youth

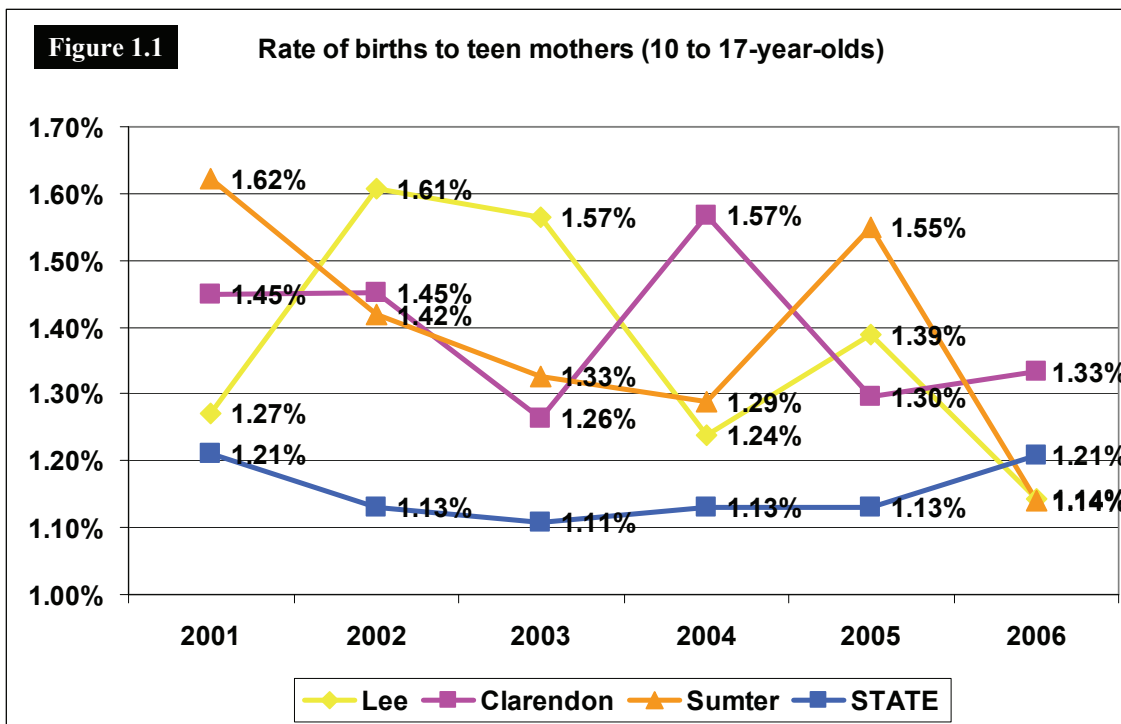
Goal: To provide a community structure that has a positive impact on each person's development and ability to contribute to their families and others.

Prioritized issues that can be affected by community actions:

- A. *Reduce incidence of teen pregnancy and single-parent families*
- B. *Provide training to enhance parenting skills*
- C. *Reduce incidence of substance-abuse problems*
- D. *Satisfy the recreational needs and quality of life opportunities for youth and seniors*

## Births to teen mothers (10 to 17-year-olds)

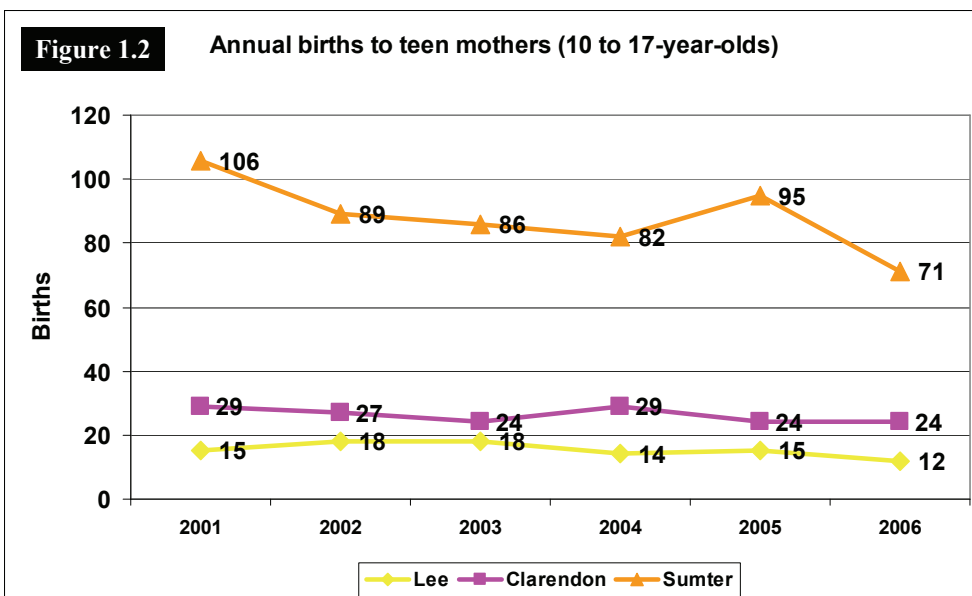
Figure 1.1 presents the percentage of girls, ages 10 to 17, who gave birth in each county annually. The tri-county area teen birth rates are volatile in the chart, but it's clear to see they generally are all above the state average teen birth rate, except for year 2006 when Lee and Sumter counties did better than the state norm. Sumter County has seen a general decrease in teen birth rates since 2001 with the exception of 2005. Clarendon and Lee counties' rates are more inconsistent; while the state saw a general decrease until 2006.



Source: S.C. DHEC, Division of Biostatistics

Figure 1.2 shows actual teen births in the three counties by year. The chart indicates teen births in Sumter County have decreased annually with the exception of 2005 where there was an increase. Births to teens in Clarendon and Lee counties don't show as much change.

Since the late 1990s however, all three counties have seen improvement. From 1996-98, Sumter County averaged 114 teen births each year; Clarendon recorded about 36 births annually and Lee averaged 27.



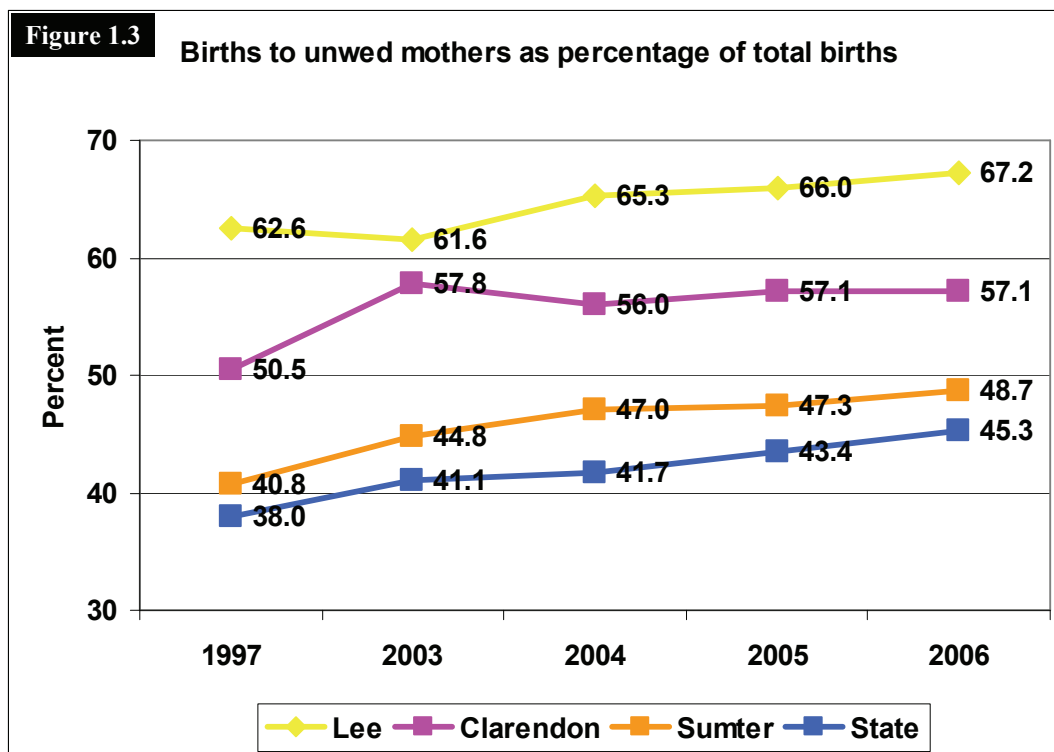
Only live births to teen mothers are recorded here; thus, abortions and fetal deaths are not included. **According to studies in the field, the declines can be attributed to enhanced use of contraceptives and not necessarily abstinence.**

Continuing reductions in this category are critical since research shows births to teen mothers can result in numerous societal problems. These social ills include higher risk of mothers not graduating from high school, poor levels of prenatal care, and increased potential for child abuse. Children are more likely to perform poorly in school, engage in criminal activity and become teen parents themselves. Additionally, births to teen mothers also create a significant economic strain when considering government payments through Medicaid and child support payments, which often have to be made by an unwed father of the child.

### Births to unwed mothers (All ages)

Over the last 20 years, births to unwed mothers have become a serious issue across the U.S. Unwed mothers and their children face a high risk of poverty due to low relative household income. Through the last decade statistics show about one in three unwed mothers in the tri-county area who give birth have less than a high school diploma or GED, seriously curtailing their earnings potential. State educational attainment statistics for unwed mothers are very similar. These mothers also face a difficult challenge in balancing work and rearing their children during the child's critical early years of mental development. Research reveals there is a direct correlation between a child from a low-income family and that child's lack of readiness for school.

Births to unwed mothers have increased significantly in Sumter County through the years as evidenced by Figure 1.3 while total births in the county have been fairly flat. In 1997, 40.8 percent of all births in Sumter were to unwed mothers. In 2006, the county rate was 48.7 percent, 3.4 percent above the state average. Clarendon and Lee counties have also seen spikes in births to unwed mothers as a percentage of total births.



Source: S.C. DHEC, Division of Biostatistics

Statistics reveal 79.5 percent of out-of-wedlock births in the tri-county area since 1997 have been by African-American females and 20.0 percent by white females. The general population breakdown of the three counties is 50.2 percent African-American, 47.1 percent white and 2.7 percent other races. Since 1997, 59 percent of all unwed mothers in the tri-county area have been 18-24 years old.

Weighing births to unwed mothers as a percentage of total births for the counties and the state shows the problem is getting more severe. All geographic areas show an increase through the years since 1997 as revealed in Figure 1.3.

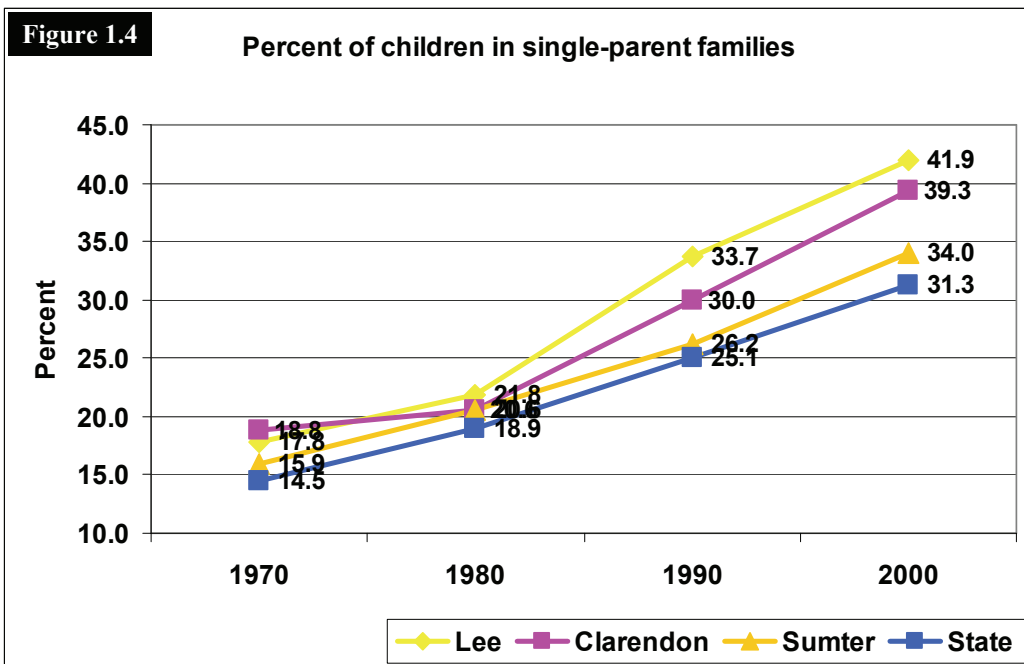
The statistics are especially telling for Lee and Clarendon counties. About two of every three births in Lee in recent years are to unwed mothers. In Clarendon, the percentages have increased from 50 percent in 1997 to 57.1 percent in 2006. Sumter's totals have risen from about 41 percent to almost 49 percent during the timeframe. State averages are slightly below Sumter. The percentages illustrate the scope of the social problem and its long-term economic implications on the tri-county area.

Births to unwed mothers are also on the rise nationally. In the late 1990s, the U.S. average was about 33 percent. In 2005, the rate was 36.8 percent according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Unwed mothers often experience inadequate prenatal care due to lower income levels and these mothers often give birth to low birth-weight babies. These conditions are discussed in the Health section of this report.

### Single-parent families

The continuing rise in out-of-wedlock births and high divorce rates has resulted in a tremendous increase in single-parent families throughout the U.S. and South Carolina in recent decades. The tri-county area has a particularly high rate of single-parent families. As of the 2000 Census, 41.9 percent of all children 17-and-under in Lee County lived in single-parent families as Figure 1.4 shows. In Clarendon the rate was 39.3 percent and Sumter followed at 34.0 percent.



Source: U.S. Census 2000

In 2000, 31.3 percent of all South Carolina children were from single-parent households. The percentage of children in single-parent families has more than doubled in each county and the state since 1970. Given higher birth rates to unwed mothers in recent years, the percent of children in single-parent families will undoubtedly continue to rise when the 2010 Census is taken. Some intra-Census data suggests the state rate will be in the high 30s.

### Poverty rate of single-parent families with children

As previously discussed, families that lack two parents in the home face much greater risk of poverty. Often these households are led by a mother who may lack sufficient education to earn family-sustaining wages. U.S. Census statistics reveal for every three children in poverty in the state, two are from a single-parent family. Data also shows if a child in the state is in a single-parent family, there is a 34.0 percent probability he will be living in poverty (see Table 1.1). If the child is in a traditional two-parent family, the risk of poverty is 6.2 percent in the state. As would be expected these trends hold up in the tri-county area, even though poverty percentages are somewhat higher in each category.

**Table 1.1** Single-parent families and poverty

Area	Minority children in single-parent families	White children in single-parent families	Children in single-parent families in poverty	Children in married-couple families in poverty
Clarendon	53.2%	17.9%	42.7%	11.5%
Lee	51.6%	18.1%	39.9%	9.0%
Sumter	49.0%	17.3%	36.6%	7.2%
STATE	52.0%	19.0%	34.0%	6.2%

Source: U.S. Census 2000

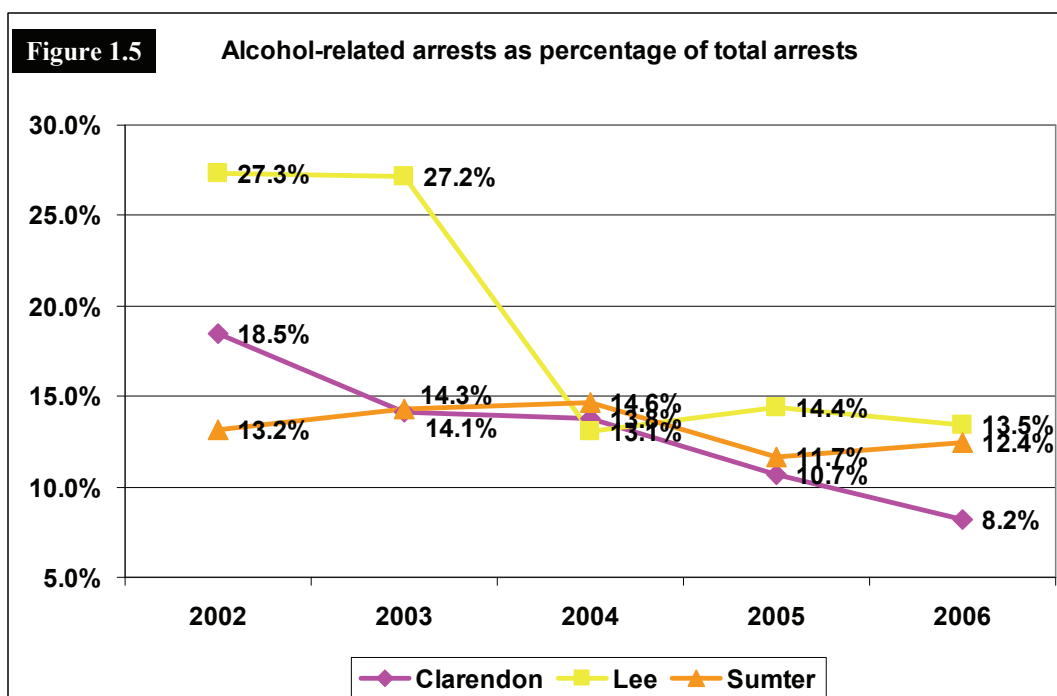
Therefore, greater efforts to reduce out-of-wedlock births and the divorce rate are part of the solution to lowering poverty levels. Children in poverty face heightened risk of lack of school readiness. Outreach needs to be done in the African-American community to remedy the breakdown of the traditional family since data shows about one-half of all African-American children are in single-parent families.

In addition to poverty, single-parent families face increased risks for many other difficulties including lack of proper child supervision and preventative medical care, juvenile delinquency and high school non-completion. These effects among many others make the growing number of single-parent families important targets for community involvement.

### Alcohol-related arrests

Alcohol abuse is a long-standing problem in society. Alcohol is a drug but it's not perceived to have the negative impact of illegal drugs such as cocaine, crack, heroin, marijuana and methamphetamines. However, in reality, alcohol abuse causes similar damage to individuals and families.

In recent years, alcohol-related arrests have declined in the tri-county area and the state. According to police, this is partially due to effective efforts by law enforcement to deter alcohol-related crimes. Fewer alcohol arrests are also largely due to local law enforcement's enhanced efforts in fighting illegal drugs instead of alcohol as is explained later. Many consider the rate of DUI arrests depends heavily on the aggressiveness of law enforcement.



Source: South Carolina Law Enforcement Division, 2002-2006 data

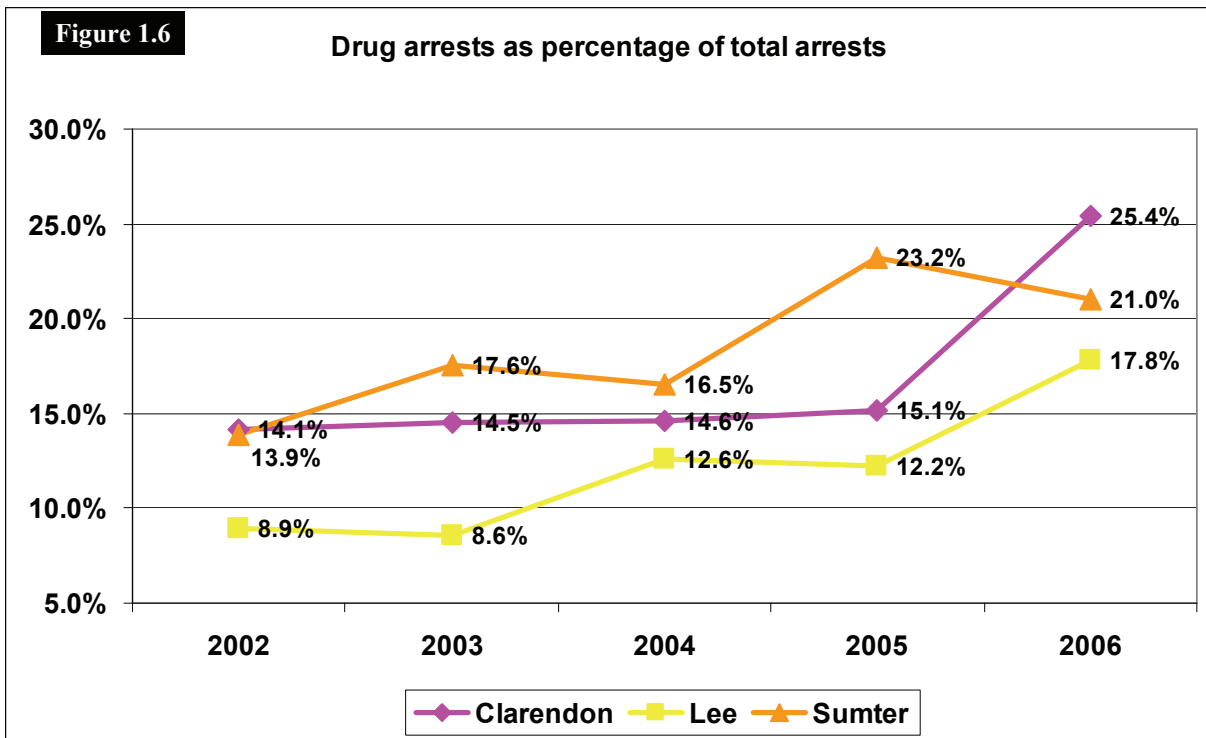
As Figure 1.5 illustrates, Clarendon and Lee counties have seen total alcohol-related arrests as a percentage of total arrests decrease from high levels in 2002. Alcohol-related arrests include DUIs, liquor law violations and drunkenness. Sumter has experienced a smaller decline, but the county didn't have as high a percentage of alcohol arrests at the outset in 2002. State percentages of alcohol arrests compared to total arrests are similar to Sumter, falling about 2 percent from 15.6 percent to 13.7 percent over the five-year period. All three counties' alcohol arrests were below the state average in 2006.

The big declines in Clarendon and Lee are similar to other small, rural counties in the state. Generally these counties have very limited law enforcement resources and in recent years more manpower is being focused on drug crime efforts.

### Drug crime arrests

Law enforcement emphasis on fighting drug activity has been growing in recent years in the tri-county area and across the state as evidenced by increasing percentages of drug law violations compared to total arrests. While illegal drugs are a factor in the commission of a multitude of crimes, drug law violations by themselves rank as the highest crime category in the state. In 2006, 17 percent of all arrests in the state were drug law violations according to State Law Enforcement Division data. Generally, drug crime arrests lead all arrests in most counties also.

Figure 1.6 illustrates the increasing percentage of drug arrests in the tri-county area through the years, especially in Clarendon and Lee counties. According to law enforcement officials, the likely rationale for the large increases is added focus and resources on the part of police in tackling drug activity. For each county, drug arrests grew significantly as a percentage of total arrests during the five-year period from 2002 to 2006. For the state overall, drug arrests climbed from 13 percent of all arrests to 17 percent during the timeframe.



Source: South Carolina Law Enforcement Division, 2002-2006 data

Counties similar to Sumter also showed more drug arrests as a percentage of total arrests during the five-year period. Aiken, Anderson, Greenwood, Lancaster and Orangeburg counties all had trends similar to Sumter. Additionally, counties similar to Clarendon and Lee – Allendale, Dillon, Hampton, Jasper and Marlboro – had increasing percentages as well.

Law enforcement must continue its emphasis on getting drugs off the street and there is a need for a concerted effort by private and public agencies to implement more effective and far-reaching drug prevention and rehabilitation programs. These expanded programs must operate both in the community and as part of the criminal sentencing system.

Reviewing annual arrest data from SLED for years 2002-'06 found that males are significantly more involved in drug activity than females, with African-American males outnumbering white males. A percentage breakdown of drug arrests in the state by race and gender for the five years showed the following:

**5-year summary of drug arrests in state by demographic (2002-'06)**

- 45.8% African-American males
- 36.2% White males
- 11.0% White females
- 6.4% African-American females
- 0.5% Other races

Not only is illegal drug use a growing criminal activity and the root cause of other crimes, it weighs heavily on individuals, families and communities in the tri-county area. The economic, medical and emotional costs to families of a drug abuser are great and far reaching.

**Table 1.2** Substance-abuse arrests as percentage of total arrests

Area	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
Clarendon	32.6%	28.6%	28.4%	25.8%	33.6%
Lee	36.2%	35.8%	25.7%	26.6%	31.3%
Sumter	27.1%	31.9%	31.1%	34.9%	33.4%
STATE	28.6%	28.3%	27.3%	28.5%	30.7%

*Source: South Carolina Law Enforcement Division, 2002-2006 data*

When weighing drug and alcohol abuse together, substance-abuse crimes are fundamentally the core of criminal activity in the local area and the state as shown in Table 1.2. While substance abuse is a factor in the commission of a multitude of crimes, solely by themselves alcohol and drug abuse account for basically one of every three crimes locally and statewide.

**Youth population demographics**

According to the best estimates available, the percentage of youth in the tri-county area in poverty has been increasing slightly since 2000. The Census Bureau's Small Area Income & Poverty Estimates calculates the number of children 17-and-under in poverty by county. The poverty level is below an income cutoff or threshold, where a family needs public money and service to subsist. The threshold varies based on family size and number of children under 18 years old. If a family's total income is less than the threshold, then the family is considered below the poverty level. Examples of poverty thresholds from 2004 were the following:

**Family size & composition**

- Three people (one child under 18)
- Four people (two children under 18)
- Five people (three children under 18)

**Income threshold**

- \$15,205
- \$19,157
- \$22,543

According to the 2004 estimates, 26.1 percent of children in the tri-county area were living in poverty (11,017 of 42,258). The state average was almost 5 percent lower at 21.2 percent. (More statistics on youth in poverty are in the Education section.)

**Table 1.3** Children 17-and-under in poverty – 2004 estimates

County	Youth in poverty	Total youth	Poverty rate
Clarendon	2,463	8,012	30.7%
Lee	1,389	4,942	28.1%
Sumter	7,165	29,304	24.5%
<b>Tri-county</b>	<b>11,017</b>	<b>42,258</b>	<b>26.1%</b>
<b>STATE</b>	<b>217,509</b>	<b>1,025,986</b>	<b>21.2%</b>

Source: Census Bureau Small Area Income & Poverty Estimates, 2004

For a breakdown of poverty by race, the only measurement is Census 2000. Table 1.4 reveals minority children in the tri-county area are much more likely to suffer from poverty than white children.

As the table details, **one in three minority children in the area were in poverty in 2000.** In comparison, only **one in 12.5 white children in the area were in poverty.** State averages were similar to the local statistics. There is a clear connection between racial poverty and the prevalence of out-of-wedlock births and single-parent families in the African-American and minority community as discussed previously.

**Table 1.4** Children 17-and-under in poverty by race – 2000

Area	Minority children in poverty	White children in poverty
Clarendon	36.3%	12.1%
Lee	33.5%	1.9%
Sumter	32.0%	7.7%
<b>STATE</b>	<b>31.9%</b>	<b>9.4%</b>

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000

While the majority of youth are either in school or working, the need to provide a variety of recreational outlets and opportunities is important to their quality of life. However -- similar to the state as a whole -- the tri-county area has a large number of “at-risk” youth who have not completed high school or made the transition from school to work, significantly affecting their development as future workers. Youth ages 16-19 that are neither in school, even part-time, nor working any hours are defined as “idle youth.” These kids are most at risk of substance abuse and other criminal activity. Recreational opportunities alone can’t address the problems facing idle youth, but since those services are needed by other youth, any participation from idle youth can be considered a positive.

Table 1.5 shows as of Census 2000 there were 1,030 youth in the area that fit the definition of idle. These “at risk” youth are hard to reach and pose a difficult problem for agencies.

It’s important to mention that these totals are likely well below actual levels due to “social desirability bias” in Census surveys. On many issues in surveys, the general public gives responses that portray them or their families favorably. In this case the bias would reduce idle youth counts.

**Table 1.5** Idle youth totals – 2000

County	Total
Clarendon	281
Lee	117
Sumter	632
<b>TRI-COUNTY TOTAL</b>	<b>1,030</b>

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000

A much better gauge of idle youth is to measure the disposition of public school students by grade enrollment levels. In the tri-county area, weighing official 8<sup>th</sup> grade membership against official 12<sup>th</sup> grade membership four years later can effectively estimate the number of students who are dropping out of the public school system. Total estimated dropouts by county and cohort class are provided in Table 1.6.

**Table 1.6** Estimated cohort class dropouts  
(8<sup>th</sup> grade membership – 12<sup>th</sup> grade membership 4 years later)

County	'00-01	'01-02	'02-03	'03-04	'04-05	'05-06	'06-07
Clarendon	182	139	164	135	135	163	165
Lee	138	101	81	74	48	78	94
Sumter	482	511	422	474	355	348	357
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>802</b>	<b>751</b>	<b>667</b>	<b>683</b>	<b>538</b>	<b>589</b>	<b>616</b>
<b>Dropouts each year per class</b>	<b>267</b>	<b>250</b>	<b>222</b>	<b>228</b>	<b>179</b>	<b>196</b>	<b>205</b>

As an example, in Sumter County the table shows 482 public school students from a total spring 8<sup>th</sup> grade enrollment of 1,487 in the 1996-97 year were not enrolled in 12<sup>th</sup> grade four years later in 2000-01. Sumter County's 12<sup>th</sup> grade enrollment that year in the three public high schools was 1,005. When adding Clarendon and Lee counties' cohort losses of 182 and 138 respectively for the four years for the Class of 2000-01, total "leavers" from the three counties' public school systems amounted to 802. Leavers would average 267 per academic year for the cohort.

A small percentage of these leavers are likely migrating out of their respective counties with their families. Census data does show slightly more youth 19-and-under are leaving the tri-county area than migrating in since 2000, but this total is less than five percent. Then, the vast majority of these 267 leavers from the public high schools for the 2000-01 cohort must have been dropouts. Some of these dropouts might have found employment in low-skill, low-wage fields, but the majority is likely idle youth, without a job and not in school.

Through the years, total leavers from the system have declined somewhat due mostly to improved high school graduation rates. However, the aggregate total of 1,547 for the seven cohorts shows the three counties are generating additional idle youth every year. Research shows about 40 percent of minority male students in the area eventually drop out of the public school system, representing the largest demographic of leavers. (More analysis of dropouts and county graduation rates are included in the Education section.)

While idle youth require much help to return to a productive lifestyle, another segment of the youth population that requires extra assistance are juveniles who have been arrested by law enforcement and entered the juvenile justice system. These kids usually range from 12 to 17 years old and could be in school or have dropped out. A very small percentage of juvenile offenders in the state are committed to a Department of Juvenile Justice long-term facility.

During fiscal year 2006 (July 1, 2005 – June 30, 2006) there were 608 juvenile justice cases in the tri-county area, which factors to about 35 cases per 1,000 area children. The state average was roughly 60 juvenile cases per 1,000 children. The lower area rate is likely partially due to juveniles in the tri-county area committing fewer crimes than the average county in the state. Another probable reason for the lower area rate is the counties have more intervention programs in place for area juvenile offenders than is the norm in the state, resulting in fewer repeat cases. State statistics show in 51 percent of cases in fiscal year 2006 juveniles had prior referrals to court. In the tri-county area only 41 percent of cases involved repeat juveniles, suggesting more intervention programs in the area. These state and local trends are also apparent in earlier years.

**Table 1.7** Fiscal 2006 juvenile justice cases in tri-county area

County	Total cases	13 & under	14 & 15 year-olds	16 & 17 year-olds	Whites	Afri.-Amer.	'Non-traditional' home setting*
Clarendon	119	19%	54%	27%	23%	77%	77%
Lee	53	42%	46%	12%	4%	96%	63%
Sumter	436	14%	43%	43%	19%	81%	76%

\* Non-traditional home means juvenile is not from a two-parent home, either both natural parents or a parent and stepparent.

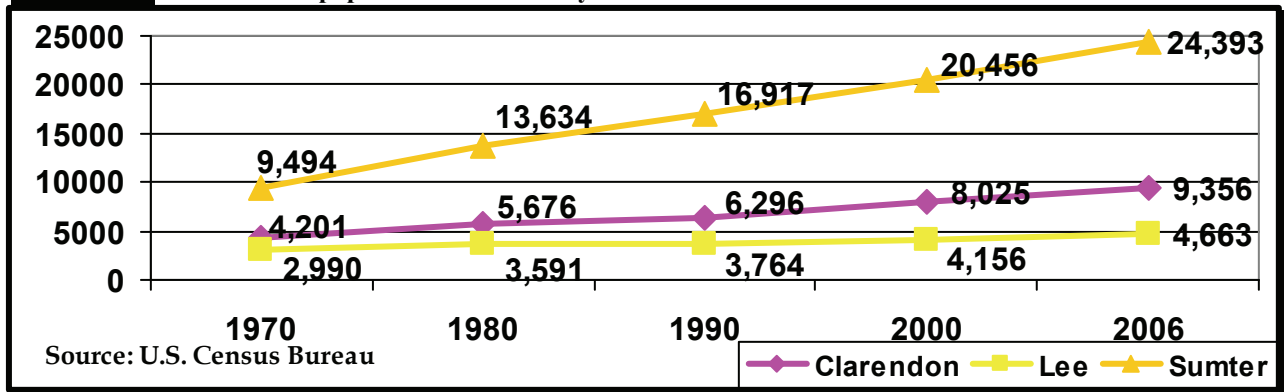
As Table 1.7 reveals, 82 percent of juvenile justice cases from summer 2005 to summer 2006 – or 496 of 608 – in three counties involved African Americans. This demographic total represented a percentage increase from the three previous years, where rates ranged from 75 percent to 77 percent. About three of every four juvenile cases in fiscal year 2006 involved a child from a non-traditional home, where two parents are not present. Additionally, 14 and 15-year-olds compose the bulk of juvenile cases in the tri-county area.

Continued efforts need to be made at prevention and intervention for “at risk” youth in part through adult-supervised recreational activities to help steer these children toward a better future.

### Senior population demographics

The 55-and-older segment of the population is the fastest-growing category of the American population and also the tri-county area. This age grouping includes “Baby Boomers” born between 1946 and 1964 - the largest cohort of people in U.S. history.

**Figure 1.7** 55-and-over population in tri-county area



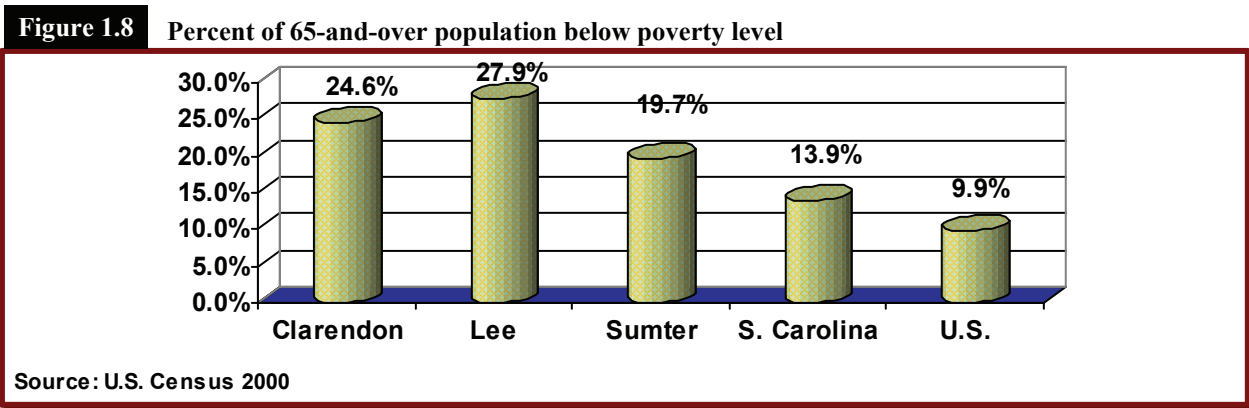
As Figure 1.7 illustrates, Sumter County seniors have nearly doubled since 1980 rising from 13,634 in the 1980 Census to 24,393 in the 2006 estimate. Clarendon hasn't seen quite as much growth, increasing its totals by about 65 percent, and Lee has experienced a smaller rise in seniors. It's important to mention the majority of these seniors aren't necessarily new residents to the counties, but are residents aging into the senior category over time.

Population estimates data since 2000 indicates slightly more seniors are migrating out of the tri-county area than in, likely preferring to reside in areas with more natural amenities, such as the coast or mountains.

Many seniors have more available time, resources and interest in recreational activities than people of other ages. Senior population growth requires a re-evaluation of the scope of recreational activities in the counties. Although there are a significant number of these seniors who are interested in physical

recreation, the majority prefers a more cultural aspect of recreation. The expansion of the senior population in the tri-county area will continue, given more and more “Baby Boomers” aging into it. To attract more seniors to stay in the area and others to move in, recreational opportunities must expand to accommodate their interests. Significant research shows solid economic benefits in attracting retirees to an area.

Another portion of the senior population that warrants attention is the 65-and-over segment that lives below the poverty level. At the national level, 9.9 percent of seniors 65-and-older were below the poverty level at Census 2000. As would be expected the state total was somewhat higher at 13.9 percent. Poverty levels for seniors in Lee and Clarendon counties were very alarming: Lee doubled the state rate at 27.9 percent, meaning slightly more than one in four seniors 65-and-older in the county lived below the poverty threshold. Clarendon registered 24.6 percent of its elderly population in poverty. At Census 2000 Sumter County had 19.7 percent of its 65-and-over population below the poverty level, a figure still significantly higher than the U.S. average.



Numerically, the totals were 3,740 of 16,884 area seniors 65-and-older for whom poverty was determined, or 22.2 percent, were in poverty in 2000.

“Severe poverty” is another important measurement, gauging the percentage of people with family incomes below one-half of the poverty threshold. A total of 1,062 seniors 65-and-older in the tri-county area, or 6.3 percent, were in this category at Census 2000. Table 1.8 gives summary breakdowns.

**Table 1.8** 65-and-over population by poverty level

County	Below poverty	Severe poverty
Clarendon	1,099	298
Lee	653	224
Sumter	1,988	540
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>3,740 (22.2%)</b>	<b>1,062 (6.3%)</b>

It’s necessary to mention these statistics might not completely capture county poverty levels since poverty is somewhat difficult for the Census Bureau to measure, given many impoverished families might live with relatives or in a shelter and are not contained to a particular household. Census Bureau measurements are generally more precise when poverty is less and more families live in households with their own address.

Still, the data establishes that the tri-county area has a large number of seniors in economic distress. In terms of quality of life issues, these seniors pose a different challenge for our area. Recreational activities for this group of seniors would have to involve little or no cost and may also require transportation assistance from rural areas.

The area’s recreation and quality of life requirements must encompass a diverse mix of physical, cultural and social activities to accommodate the needs of the youth and elderly across various levels of economic status.