



# 2014 Solano Children's Report Card

Children's  
Network  
*A united voice  
for the children of Solano County*



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Developed by the  
Children's Network of Solano County  
With  
Recommendations by the  
Solano Children's Alliance

*A united voice* **Children's  
Network**  
*for the children of Solano County*

# Introduction

In years 2000 through 2003, the Children’s Network published the first Solano Children’s Report Cards under a grant from the California Endowment. In 2007, the First 5 Solano Children and Families Commission funded a comprehensively updated Children’s Report Card. In 2010, 2012, and 2013, Children’s Network published scaled-back updates to the report card, despite a lack of dedicated funding, in an effort to track the impact of the Great Recession on local children and families. This has left us in a great position to contrast indicators of child wellbeing before, during, and after the Great Recession.

In this year’s update to the Report Card, we were surprised to find that, despite significant improvements in local unemployment rates, housing values, and foreclosure rates, and despite improvements in some special categories, such as school suspensions and child abuse referrals, as a whole we are leaving far too many children behind, trapped in impoverished and often toxic environments.

Child poverty actually **increased** in Solano in 2012, the most recent year with comprehensive data. And middle-income families saw their median household incomes continue to decline despite the increased cost of living. Far too many of our young people are growing up in families with very significant financial challenges.

Poverty may seem like an intractable issue, but there is much that can be done to ameliorate the harm to children and families. Affordable housing programs, improved transportation, significantly increased availability of child care subsidies so that a parent can afford to work, community living-wage requirements, even assistance with basic needs such as utilities and food, all play a role.

Failure to help families climb out of adverse circumstances carries a stiff penalty for us all. In a recently published report from the Annie E Casey Foundation, “Race for Results: Building a path to opportunity for all children,” researchers observed, *“Differences in opportunity are evident from the early years of a child’s life . . . such circumstances derail healthy development and lead to significant psychological and physiological trauma. Research has shown that growing up in chronic poverty contributes directly to stress*



*at a level that can affect children's health, brain development, and social and emotional wellbeing – a response known as 'toxic stress.'”*

Solano County was hit especially hard by the recession, but has a strong track record of success when we decide to tackle a problem together. Our phenomenal success in connecting our children to health insurance is an outstanding example.

In the past, Solano County identified children as a top priority concern. That emphasis was rewarded with national recognition by America's Promise and others, including the National Association of Counties awarding us a “Counties Care for Kids” distinction. More importantly, our efforts were rewarded with steadily improving results in many areas of child wellbeing.

During the recession, attention shifted to the profound budget cuts necessitated by sharply reduced revenues, as well as to related economic development and countywide infrastructure needs. Children's needs were no longer a top County priority. Deep cuts were made to County staffing and even deeper cuts to County funds going to local human service oriented nonprofits.

Report Card updates of 2010 and 2013 and the “Impact of the Recession” report of 2012 chronicled the increasingly desperate struggle facing children and families, but the cuts, especially to state funding, just kept coming. Remaining funds for children's programming were refocused on only the most critical cases.

It is now widely agreed that we are well beyond the recession. Unemployment is down, foreclosure rates are down, home prices are recovering, and both county and state revenues are up significantly.

Despite this good news, many families in Solano County are still struggling economically, both those who are officially poor and those whose incomes are above the poverty level but not enough to make ends meet. Meanwhile funding has not been restored from cuts made during the recession to many public programs for children and families.

We begin this report with a look at the ways Solano has and has not recovered from the recession. We will follow with demographic information showing who's living in our county, then look in turn at the three remaining key areas of child wellbeing, to see how the children are faring in Solano County today compared to their experiences before the recession began.

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In Solano County, as in the rest of the country, the Great Recession is over. Rates of unemployment and foreclosure have gone down, although not to pre-recession levels. Home values, which fell so much during the recession, have been recovering.

Yet the post-recession landscape is quite different from Solano County as it was before the recession began. Workers' earnings are generally lower than they were in 2008, before the start of the recession. More than half the families with children are struggling to make ends meet. And the rate of child poverty climbed steadily from 2008 to 2012.

Everywhere we see the harm that poverty does to children. A growing body of research shows that poverty in childhood increases the risk of physical disease and mental illness throughout life. Even in the short run we see that poverty, as indicated by the percentage of children receiving subsidized school meals, is associated with lower rates of achievement in our school districts. And the lower the family income, the higher the likelihood that a child will face serious emotional problems.

In addition to family income, public resources to support children and families also took a huge hit during the recession and have not recovered, although some state funding for K-12 education has been restored. State funds coming to Solano for subsidize child care for low-income families fell from \$27,852,666 in 2007 to \$21,428,228 in 2012 – a 23% drop. Smaller – but critical – programs, such as the Black Infant Health Program, were cut, while the county reduced key staff, including social workers in the child welfare services department. Loss of public services added to declines in family income to worsen the impact on children.

## Demographics

Since 2007, before the recession began, Solano County has continued to grow, with people coming both from other countries (the largest group from Asia) and from other parts of the US – mostly from other counties in the Bay Area. The percentage of children in the county's population has continued to decline. Latinos and Asian Americans make up a growing share of the county's population, whites and African Americans a declining share.

## Health

Solano County has made and maintained some important gains in children's health. Despite a slight recent drop, more than 94% of our children have health insurance coverage. The rate of births to teen mothers has been steadily falling, reflecting the trend in the country as a whole, while the rate of breastfeeding has been growing – now more than 90% of Solano mothers breastfeed their babies for at least some period. And more than four-fifths of pregnant women receive prenatal care during their first trimester.

But tragically, despite these gains, the rate of infant mortality has been rising. And African American babies die during their first year at about twice the rate of babies from other ethnic groups.

Obesity continues to be a major threat to children's current and long-term health, with more than 15% of children and more than 40% of teenagers in Solano County classified as overweight or obese. Only about one-third of Solano students passed all six of California's physical fitness standards last year, and the rate has actually declined since the 2008-2009 school year, although fifth graders did a little better in 2012-2013.

## Education

With the drastic cuts in state child care funding, fewer children are being served. For example, in the child care voucher program, the number of Solano children served has dropped from 4,544 in 2008 to 3,698 in 2012.

Solano's K-12 schools have maintained their scores on the state's Academic Progress Index throughout the recession, with scores going up significantly in the Fairfield-Suisun district and also rising in Benicia and Vacaville. Ethnic disparities in academic achievement continue, however, with reading and math scores much lower for African American and Latino students than for other students. Fewer than one-third of Solano high school graduates have met the requirements for admission to the University of California or California State University, with major ethnic disparities in this area as well. In the last few years, Solano schools overall have succeeded in cutting the dropout rate by about one-third, but disparities between ethnic groups persist.

Recent reports have emphasized the harm caused by school suspension as a form of discipline. Solano districts vary in the rate at which they suspend students. Vallejo historically experienced high suspension rates, but Vallejo and Fairfield-Suisun have dramatically reduced their suspension rates in recent years through the use of more positive discipline methods, and Vacaville has also reduced its suspension rate.

## Child Safety

### **Child Abuse Prevention**

Many categories of maltreatment seemed to increase during the recession – possibly because of increased family stress -- then dropped after intensive community-based and home-visiting services were made available through family resource centers and partner agencies, beginning in 2011. Solano County Child Welfare Services introduced Intensive Family Maintenance Services in 2012 which focused on maintaining children in the home and preventing placement into foster care. Some funding for family support services, such as Solano’s Children’s Trust Fund, has been eroding which will have an impact on outcomes for families.

The number of Solano children in out-of-home care fell from 2006 to 2009, then rose every year since. This disturbing trend could be related to the increase in family stress during the recession as well as to the loss of Child Welfare Services staff. Recently, Child Welfare Services has been give additional resources to expand its intensive efforts to the Family Reunification Program with the goal to reunify children that enter foster care sooner rather than later.

### **Childhood Fatalities—All Causes**

The child/youth death rate (birth to age 24) has generally been about the same in Solano County since 2005. The death rate for African American children and youth, however, is more than double the rate for other ethnic groups. That rate has been going down since 2006 but is still more than twice as high as the rate for any other group.

### **Juvenile Crime and Arrests**

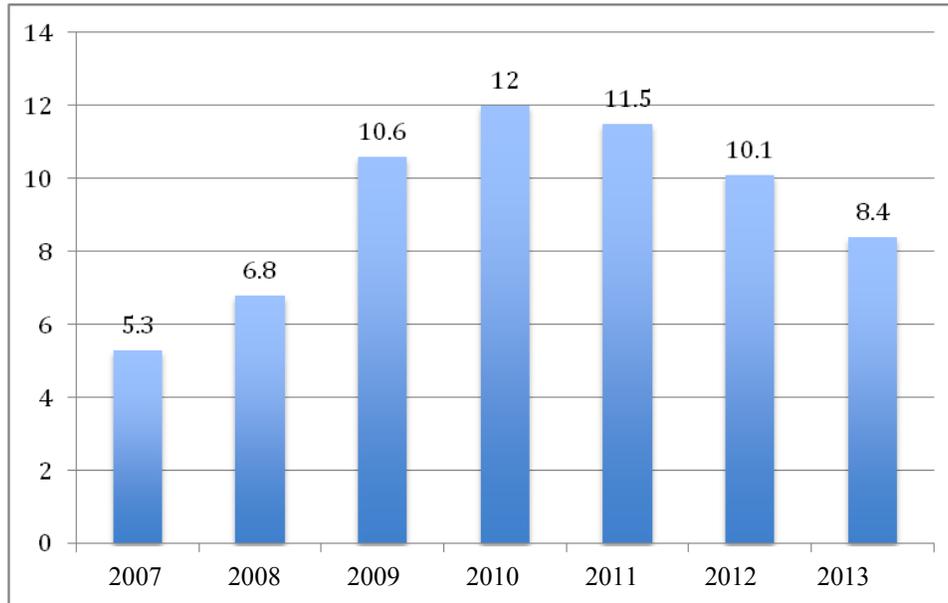
The juvenile arrest rate for felonies in general and for violent crime in particular has been going down since 2006, mirroring national patterns. Despite this improvement, Solano’s juvenile felony arrest rate is much higher than the rate in California as a whole.

# Economic Security

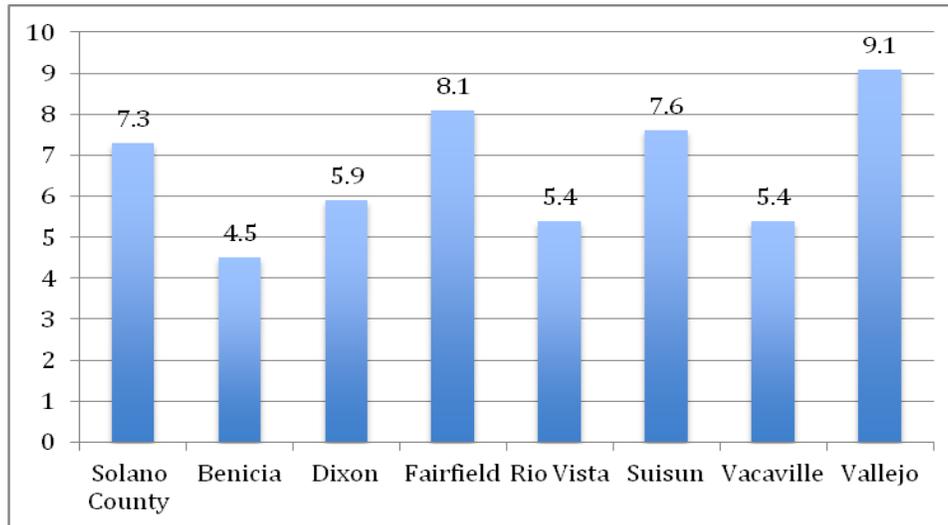
## Unemployment has gone down.

With the end of recession comes some good news for Solano County. As elsewhere in the state and nation, the unemployment rate has gone down, although at 8.4% in 2013, it was still much higher than the 5.3% level before the recession.

### Percentage of Solano County workers unemployed <sup>1</sup>



### Percentage of the workforce unemployed by city as of December 2013 <sup>2</sup>



## Housing

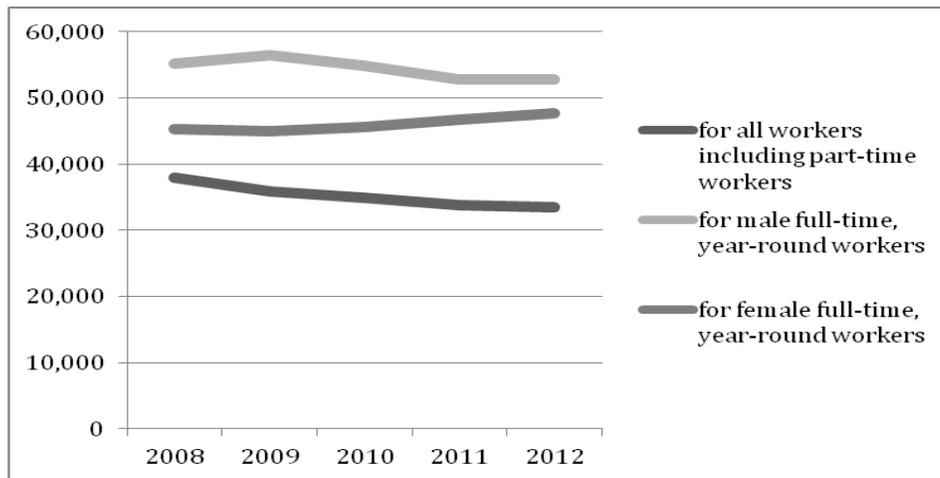
In other very welcome news, the rate of foreclosure has dropped dramatically. Default notices in Solano County dropped 24.1% from 2011 (5,137) to 2012 (3,897), although the number of notices of default in the county remained significantly higher than the pre-housing-collapse numbers. In 2005, for example, there were only 966 notices of default during the entire year. In the rest of the Bay Area, notices of default declined by 37.9% from 2011 to 2012.<sup>3</sup>

Continuing that trend, less than one percent -- .86% -- of mortgage-holders received notices of default in December 2013, compared to 1.97 percent in December 2012. The mortgage delinquency rate also fell, from 6.49 % in December 2012 to 3.57% in December 2013. The delinquency rate was highest in January 2011, at 12%.<sup>4</sup>

In addition, the prices of homes whose value dropped disastrously during the recession have now been rising rapidly: in February, for example, home prices were up 28% compared to the previous year. This price increase was more than twice the 12% average price increase in the US as a whole. The average home price increase in California was 20%. CoreLogic, a company that analyzes the housing market, expects this upward trend to continue.<sup>5</sup>

But despite these improvements in the labor market and housing market, many Solano families are struggling to make ends meet. For many workers, earnings have dropped compared to pre-recession levels.

**Earnings of Solano County workers, 2008-2012<sup>6</sup>**



**Estimated median earnings of Solano County workers, 2008 - 2012<sup>7</sup>**

	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
<b>for all workers including part-time workers</b>	38,024	35,863	35,002	33,840	33,476
<b>for male full-time, year-round workers</b>	55,148	56,526	54,954	52,834	52,848
<b>for female full-time, year-round workers</b>	45,253	44,908	45,647	46,703	47,656

### Incomes of Solano Residents

And by comparing Solano’s cost of living to the incomes of its families, we can see that roughly half the families in the county lack enough income to meet their needs.

### California Budget Project estimate of what it takes to “make ends meet” in Solano<sup>8</sup>

	Single Adult	Single-Parent Family	Two-Parent Family (One Working)	Two-Working-Parent Family
<b>Housing/ Utilities</b>	\$739 28.8%	\$1,166 19.7%	\$1,166 23.8%	\$1,166 17.7%
<b>Child Care</b>	\$0 0.0%	\$1,077 18.2%	\$0 0.0%	\$1,077 16.3%
<b>Transportation</b>	\$355 13.8%	\$355 6.0%	\$355 7.3%	\$619 9.4%
<b>Food</b>	\$293 11.4%	\$627 10.6%	\$866 17.7%	\$866 13.1%
<b>Health Care</b>	\$484 18.9%	\$1,350 22.8%	\$1,411 28.9%	\$1,411 21.4%
<b>Miscellaneous</b>	\$212 8.3%	\$439 7.4%	\$509 10.4%	\$509 7.7%
<b>Taxes</b>	\$485 18.9%	\$907 15.3%	\$583 11.9%	\$958 14.5%
<b>MONTHLY TOTAL</b>	<b>\$2,569</b>	<b>\$5,922</b>	<b>\$4,890</b>	<b>\$6,606</b>
<b>ANNUAL TOTAL</b>	<b>\$30,823</b>	<b>\$71,062</b>	<b>\$58,679</b>	<b>\$79,272</b>

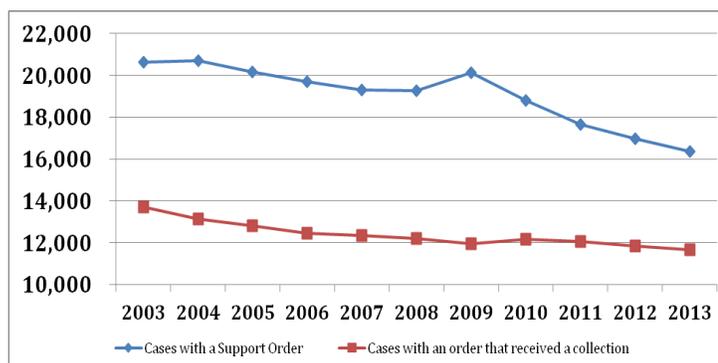
According to the U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey, in Solano County in 2012:

- ◆ More than 40% of “non-family households,” (such as single adults) made less than \$25,000 last year – nowhere near the \$30,823 California Budget Project (CBP) estimates they need to meet their needs,
- ◆ More than 40% of families made less than \$50,000 last year – well under the lowest CBP estimate of family needs (which range from \$58,679 to \$79,272).
- ◆ About half of two-parent families made less than \$75,000 last year – not as much as the \$79,272 they needed, according to the CBP.

### Child Support Collections

Children need the support of both parents, and Solano’s success rate in collecting child-support payments has improved. Over the past 10 years, child support collections have gradually grown from \$36 million to \$38.5 million in 2012. The collections did drop a bit in 2013 to \$38 million, as the number of cases also dropped, but the collection rate remains high and gradually improving. 71 % of cases with an order for support are receiving collections.<sup>9</sup>

### Child support cases decrease as collections rate remain high

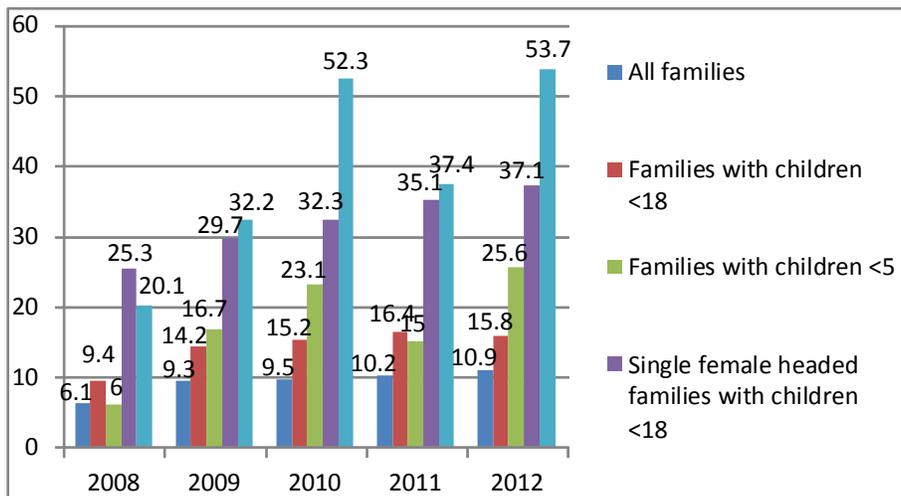


## Food Insecurity

Because so many families are still struggling economically, food insecurity is widespread, including for many people who are technically above the poverty level. Many people in Solano County – 63,430 – are estimated to be “food insecure,” meaning they have “limited or uncertain availability of nutritionally adequate and safe foods,” according to the US Department of Agriculture definition. That’s 15.3% of Solano County residents. (2012 figures)<sup>10</sup>

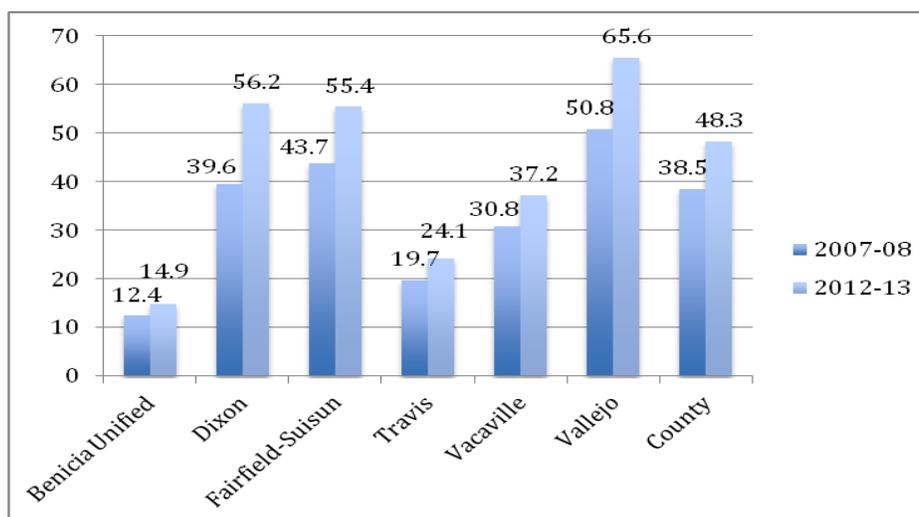
And despite the improvement in many Solano economic indicators, poverty has increased in all types of families compared to the time before the Great Recession. For our youngest children, it is actually getting worse as time goes by. Young children are the age group most likely to be in poverty in Solano, and they are not benefitting from the “recovery” that others in our community are beginning to experience. This problem is especially urgent because poverty is most harmful when children are youngest.

### Poverty trend: Percentage of families with incomes under the poverty line <sup>11</sup>

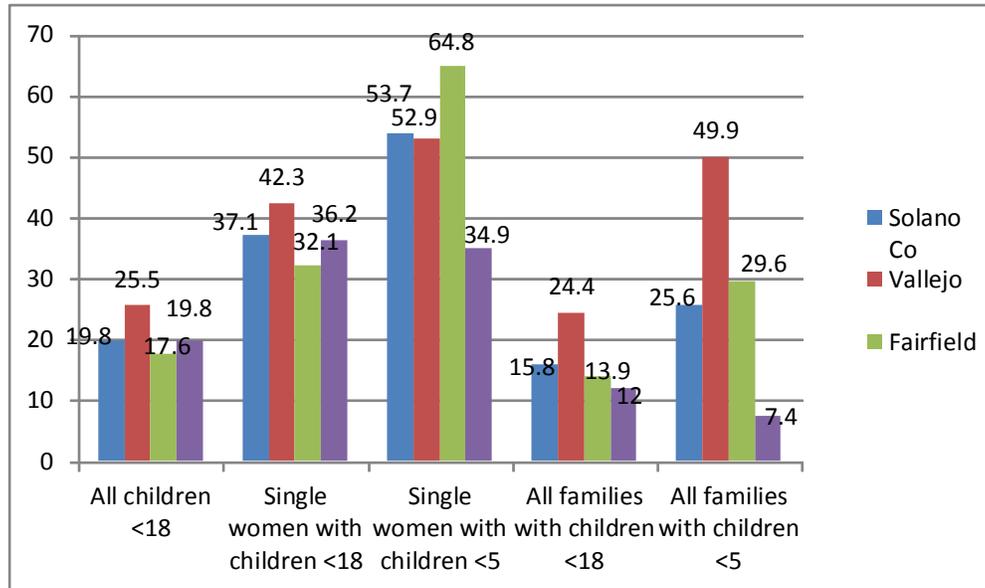


Further evidence of the steep and lasting fall into economic distress that children are experiencing can be found in the utilization of the school lunch program. In every local school district, the percentage of the children receiving subsidized meals is higher now than it was before the recession.

### Percentage of children receiving free or reduced price school meals <sup>12</sup>

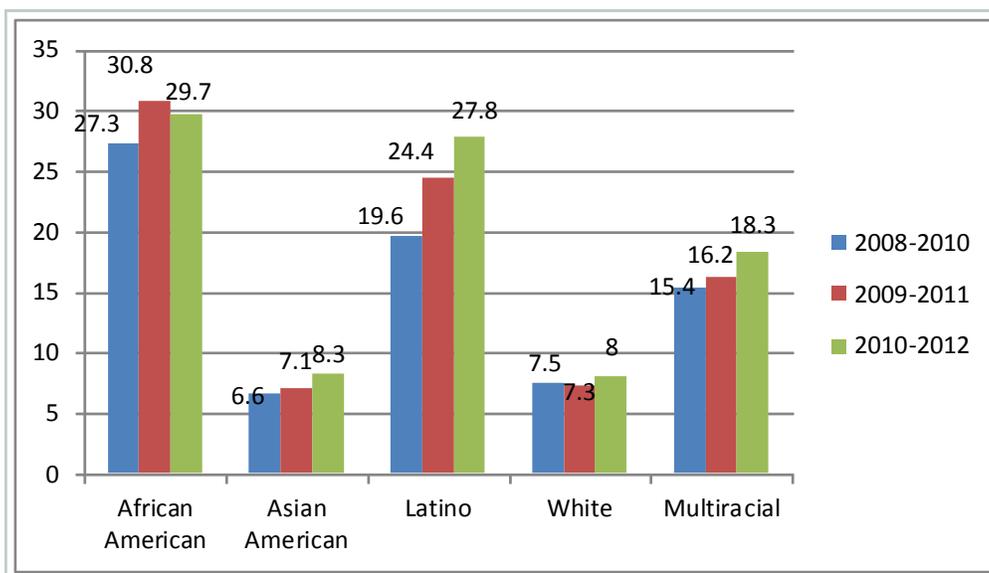


**Percentage of poverty for children by city and family type <sup>13</sup>**

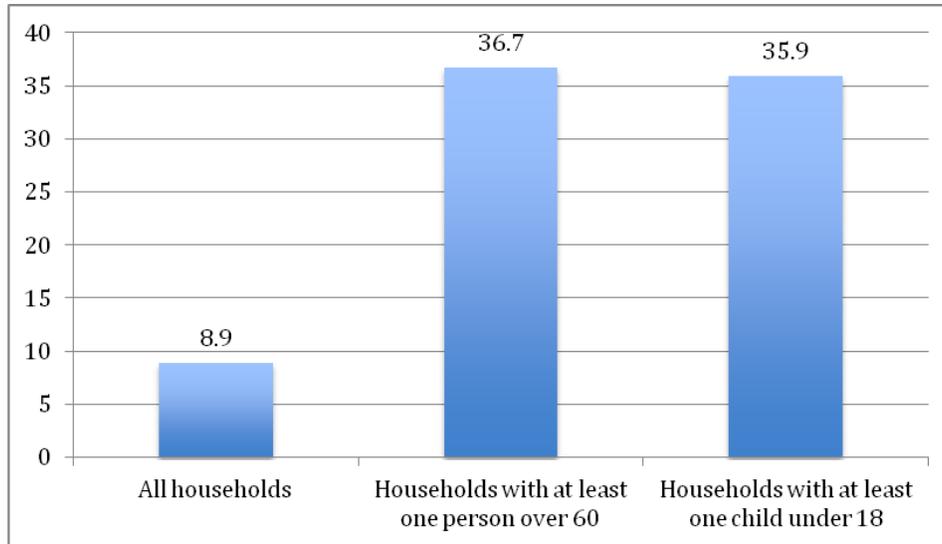


The rate of child poverty has increased in every ethnic group since the beginning of the recession, despite the economic “recovery.” African American children have the highest rates of poverty, with a slight decline from 2009-2011 to 2010-2012. The percentage of Latinos living in poverty has grown steadily from 19.6% to 27.8%. White and Asian American children have the lowest percentages of poverty, but for them, too, poverty has increased since 2008.

**Percentage of children in each ethnic group who are poor <sup>14</sup>**



**Percentage of Solano households in the Supplemental Nutrition Program (SNAP, formerly food stamps)<sup>15</sup>**



**Homelessness among Solano County children<sup>16</sup>**

Based on Solano County Office of Education data collected from each school district, over 2,100 Solano County public school students were homeless in the past school year (2012-2013), nearly 40% higher than the previous year (2011-2012) and a fourfold increase since 2010-2011. All districts but Vacaville reported increases from the previous year -- Travis, Dixon and Vallejo reported a doubling or more in homeless students. Fairfield-Suisun is tracking approximately 1,100 homeless students, about one-half of the county total.

**Homeless students by school district, Solano County, as of June 30, 2013**

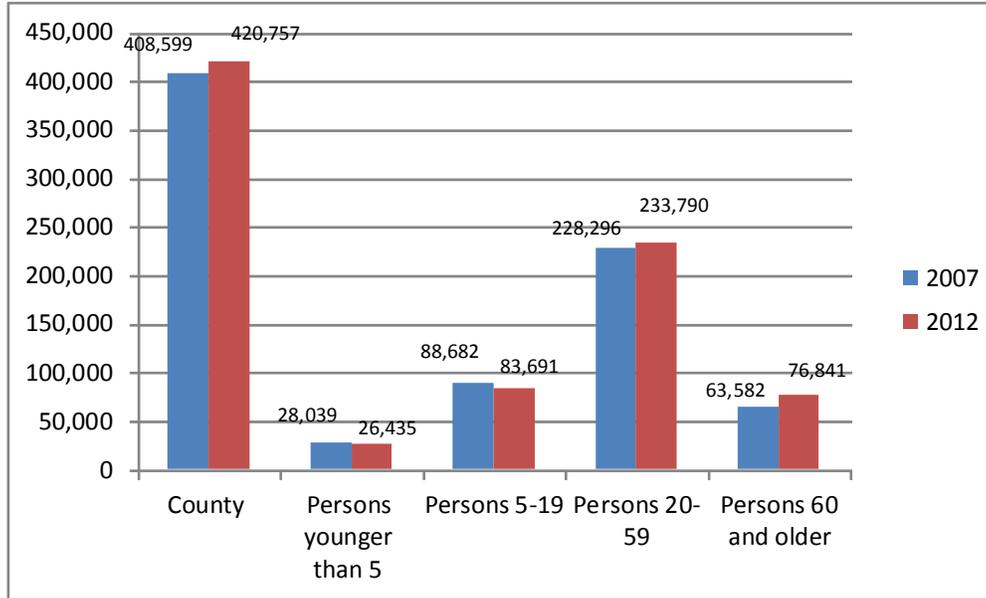
Benicia	53
Dixon	317
Fairfield-Suisun	1,112
Rio Vista	77
Travis	117
Vallejo	395

Note: There is potential for under-reporting of data due to several factors including the reluctance of families to self-report homelessness.

# Demographics

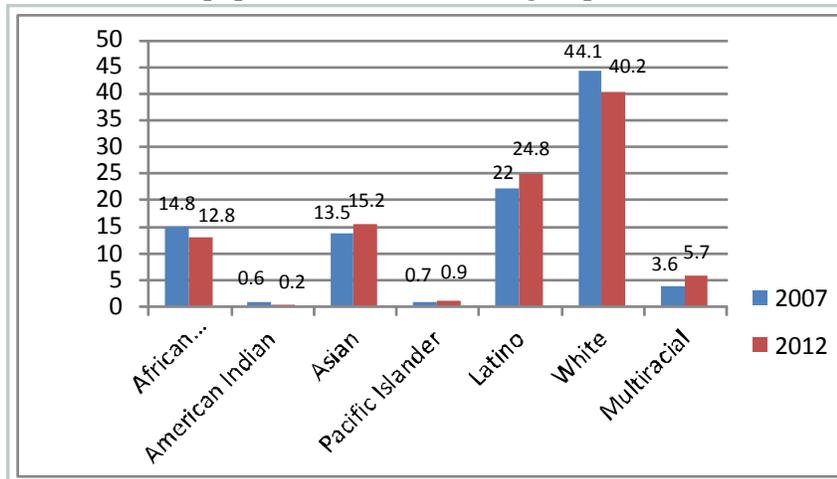
The population of Solano County is growing. The estimated population of Solano County in 2012 was 420,757, a 3% increase from the 2007 estimated population of 408,599. But the population of children and youth is shrinking as a percentage of the whole population. Children under five were 6.9 % of the population in 2007 but 6.3% in 2012. Children and youth age five to 19 were 21.7% of the population in 2007 but 19.9% in 2012. This gradual downward trend continues in the most recent data, which show another small decline in Solano’s birth rate from 2012 to 2013.<sup>17</sup>

**Solano population by age group<sup>18</sup>**



There are also shifts in the ethnic makeup of our population. Since 2007, the percentage of Solano’s people who are African American or white has gone down, while people whose ethnicity is Asian, Latino, or multiracial has increased. Additionally, 29.9% of Solano County households have a primary language other than English.<sup>19</sup>

**Percent of Solano’s population in each ethnic group<sup>20</sup>**

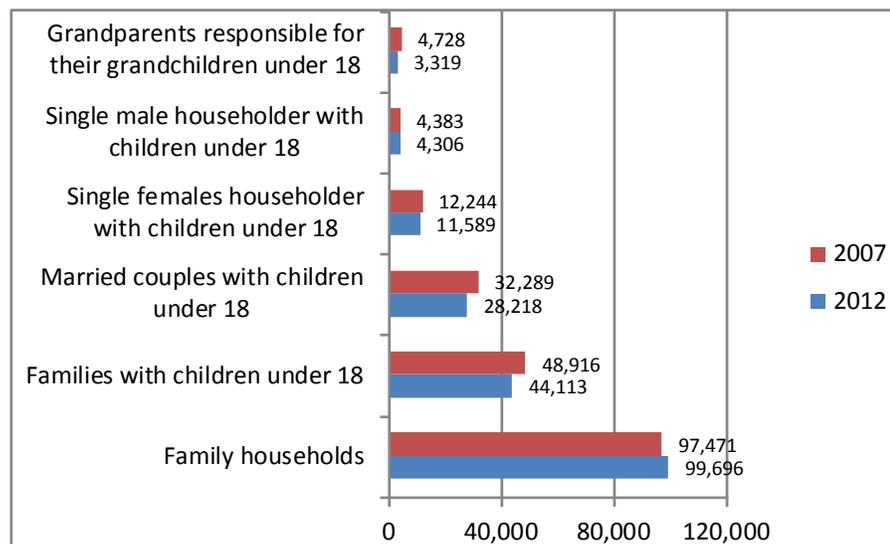


In almost every ethnic group the number of births went down slightly. The only group with more births in 2012 than in 2011 was white.

## Family characteristics

The number of families in Solano County grew from 97,471 in 2007 to 99,696 in 2012. But in that time the number of families with children under 18 declined from 48,916 to 44,113.<sup>21</sup> The percentage of married couples raising their children dropped from 66% to 64% of all families with minor children, and the percentage of grandparents caring for their grandchildren dropped from 9.7% to 7.1%. The number and percentage of single parents raising children increased during the recession and early recovery – a fact that may be contributing to increasing levels of child and family poverty and of greater levels of family stress.<sup>22</sup>

## Types of families with children in Solano County



## Immigration to the county<sup>23</sup>

Patterns of inward migration to Solano differ from commonly held perceptions. More people moved into Solano County between 2007 and 2011 than moved out. The county also gained about 4,000 residents in 2012.

People moved to Solano from:

Outside the US: The largest group was from Asia, then Central America, then Europe.

Elsewhere in the US: Mostly from other Bay Area counties: The largest group was from Contra Costa County. Then from Sacramento, Alameda, and San Francisco counties.

A smaller number from other states

People moved out of Solano to:

Sacramento County (the largest group), then other Bay Area counties: Contra Costa, Alameda, San Francisco, and Napa.

Most of the rest moved to counties elsewhere in California.

A smaller number moved elsewhere in the US.

Health and economic status during the childhood years has a huge impact, not only on children’s wellbeing and ability to learn, but on the rest of their lives. Researchers CB Forrest and AW Riley wrote that, *“One out of three disability days experienced by the US population are a result of conditions that arise in childhood.”*<sup>24</sup>

Another report explained that, *“Considerable epidemiologic evidence has accumulated, particularly over the past two decades, linking exposures in early life to health at later life stages.”*<sup>25</sup>

<b>Adult Health Outcomes Associated With Childhood Socioeconomic Conditions</b>	<b>Adult Health Outcomes Associated With Low Birth Weight</b>
Mortality from all causes	Mortality from all causes
Alcoholic cirrhosis	Cardiovascular disease
Cancer, smoking-related	Coronary heart disease
Cancer, stomach	Hypertension
Diabetes	Ischemic heart disease
Respiratory disease	Respiratory disease
Cardiovascular disease	Metabolic outcomes
Carotid atherosclerosis	Impaired glucose tolerance
Coronary heart disease	Metabolic syndrome
Ischemic heart disease	Type 2 diabetes
Myocardial infarction	Other health outcomes
Stroke	Chronic kidney disease
Metabolic outcomes	Depression
Insulin resistance	Spontaneous hypothyroidism <sup>26</sup>
Obesity	
Type 2 diabetes	
Behavioral outcomes	
Alcohol or drug abuse	
Smoking	
Other health outcomes	
Depression	
Functional limitations	

With the stakes so high, Solano County can be proud of its achievement in providing health care to almost all children. On the other hand, health care is only part of the equation – many health problems are the result of poverty and racism. So we have made progress in some areas, but the persistence of family economic stress is still impacting our children’s health.

### Percentage of Solano population with health insurance<sup>27</sup>

	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Percent of population with health coverage	89.2	87.3	87.7	87.8	86.2
Percent with private health insurance	75.8	71	69	70.2	67.4
Percent with public health coverage	24.5	27.3	29.8	29.2	30
Percent of children under 18 with health coverage	93.7	93.4	94.6	96	94.4

### Births to teen mothers<sup>28</sup>

As in the rest of the country, the teen birth rate has been going down. Between 2010-2012, each year an average of 352.3 babies were born to teenage mothers living in Solano County, a teen birth rate of 24.1 per every 1,000 births. California's rate of births to teens during that time was higher, 28.3 per 1,000.

#### Solano teen births rate per 1,000, 2008-2012

2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
34.3	31.0	25.3	24.2	22.9

### Breastfeeding<sup>29</sup>

In 2010-2012, 93.3% of Solano new mothers began breastfeeding soon after their babies were born. The rate for California as a whole was slightly lower, 91.6%. And the rate of breastfeeding has been improving.

#### Solano breastfeeding rates, 2007-2011

	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
<b>Exclusive Breastfeeding</b>	53.2%	58.2%	61.4%	64.5%	68.5%
<b>Any Breastfeeding</b>	88.2%	88.9%	90.7%	92.8%	93.2%

### Low birth weight

In the years 2010 – 2012, an average of 5,088.7 babies were born in Solano County each year. Of those babies, the average rate of low birth weight was 6.7%, close to California's rate of 6.8%.<sup>30</sup>

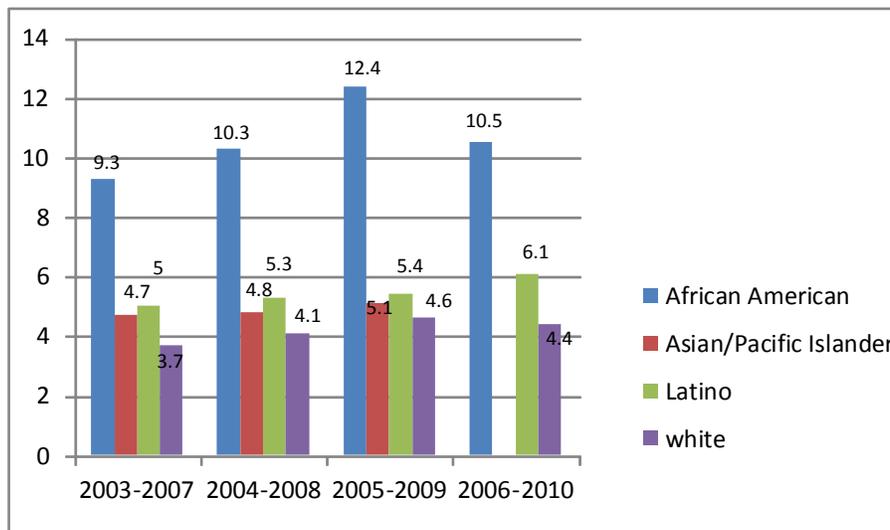
### Prenatal care during the first trimester<sup>31</sup>

In the three years 2010-2012, 77.8 % of pregnant women in Solano County received prenatal care during their first trimester, lower than the 83.6% in California as a whole. But a year-by-year comparison shows improvement.

### Infants whose mothers received prenatal care during the first trimester

2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
77.2%	77.4%	77.4%	75.9%	80.2%

### Infant mortality – deaths before age one, number per 1,000 births<sup>32</sup>



From 2003 to 2010, the rate of infant mortality in Solano County went up marginally for every ethnic group. The increases were small enough to be statistically insignificant, however. The infant mortality rate for African Americans remains tragically high compared to other groups. Recent cuts to the Black Infant Health Program raise concerns that this rate may have increased in the last few years.

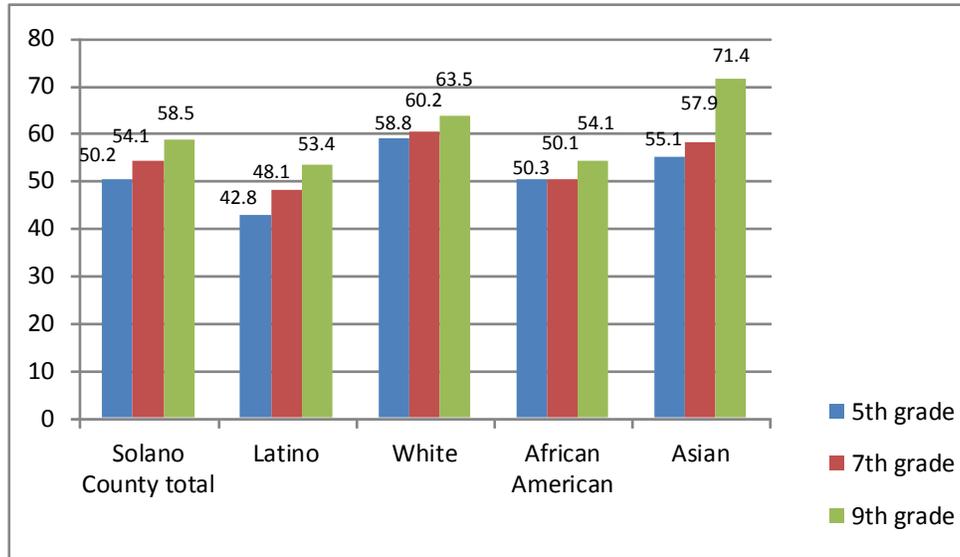
### Obesity

Obesity is a growing threat to children’s health, especially to the health of children in low-income families who struggle to pay for or even find nutritious food and may be limited to cheaper foods that are high in fat and highly processed carbohydrates, but are filling.

According to the UCLA Center for Health Policy Research, Child and Teen Health Profiles,<sup>33</sup> in 2009, 15.1% of Solano children between 2 and 11 years old were overweight, a higher percentage than in the state as a whole (13.6%).

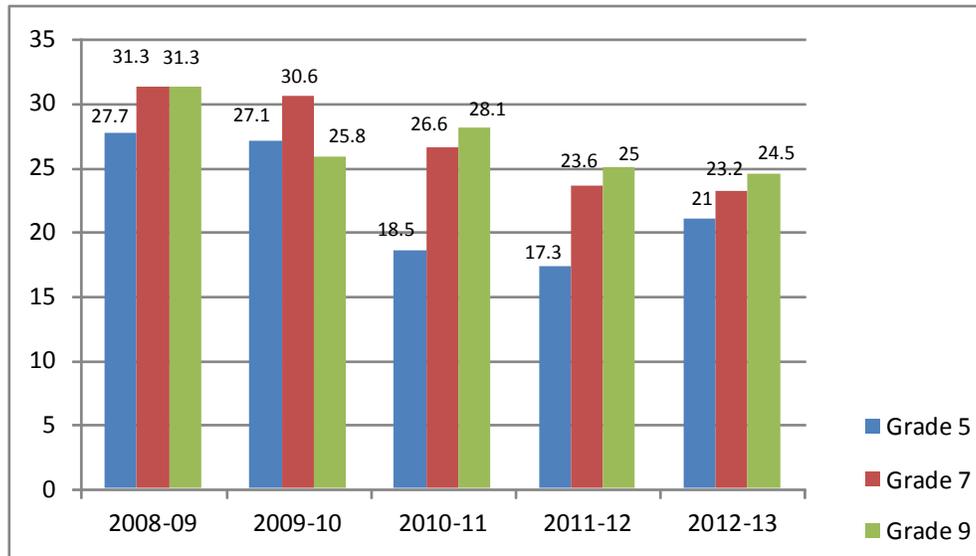
The picture is even worse for teens (ages 12 – 17). 42.4% -- more than two in five – Solano teens were overweight or obese, compared to 32.4% statewide.

**Percentage of Solano school-age children with “healthy body composition\* in 2012-13 by ethnicity<sup>34</sup>**



\* The Department of Education’s “healthy body composition” figure is based mainly on BMI along with other factors

**Percent of Solano children meeting all California Department of Education physical fitness standards<sup>35</sup>**



While the rate of physical fitness generally seems higher among ninth graders, suggesting an improvement as children grow, the overall percentage of children passing all the physical fitness tests dropped from 2008-09 to 2012-13.

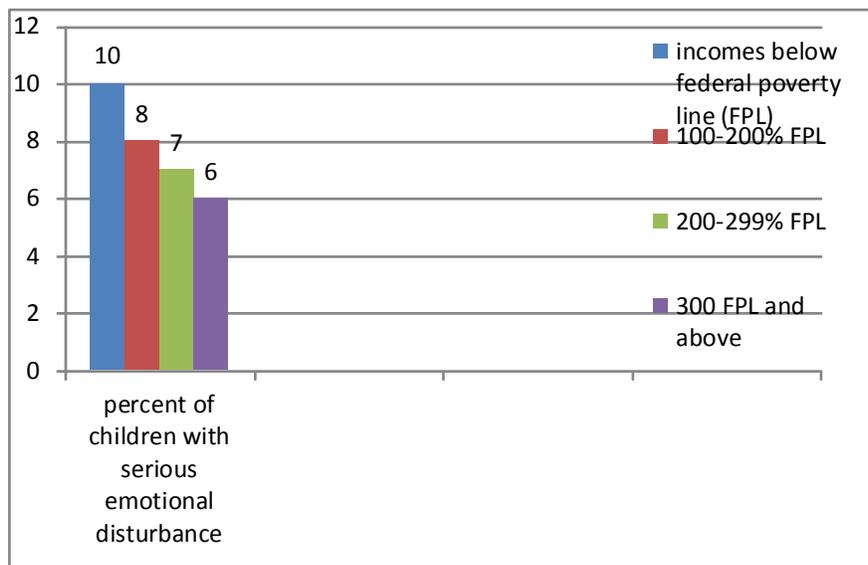
## Mental Health

Severe emotional disturbance (SED), a category for children under 18, is defined as “a mental, behavioral, or emotional disorder . . . that meets diagnostic criteria for a mental illness and has resulted in functional impairment that substantially limits participation in family, school, or community activities.”

The Greater Bay Area region tends to have a somewhat lower incidence of SED than other parts of the state; about 3.4% of our children have this diagnosis. In more rural areas of the state the incidence climbs as high as 5.3%.<sup>36</sup>

Statewide, rates of serious emotional disturbance in California children showed more variation across income levels than across gender, age groups, or ethnic groups. **One in 10 children below the poverty level suffered from a serious emotional disturbance.** Once again, our failure to provide the basic necessities of life for all our children carries a huge price, as the stress-filled, toxic environments poor children are living in beget serious mental health issues.

**Percentage of Children with Serious Emotional Disturbance, by Income, 2009<sup>37a</sup>**

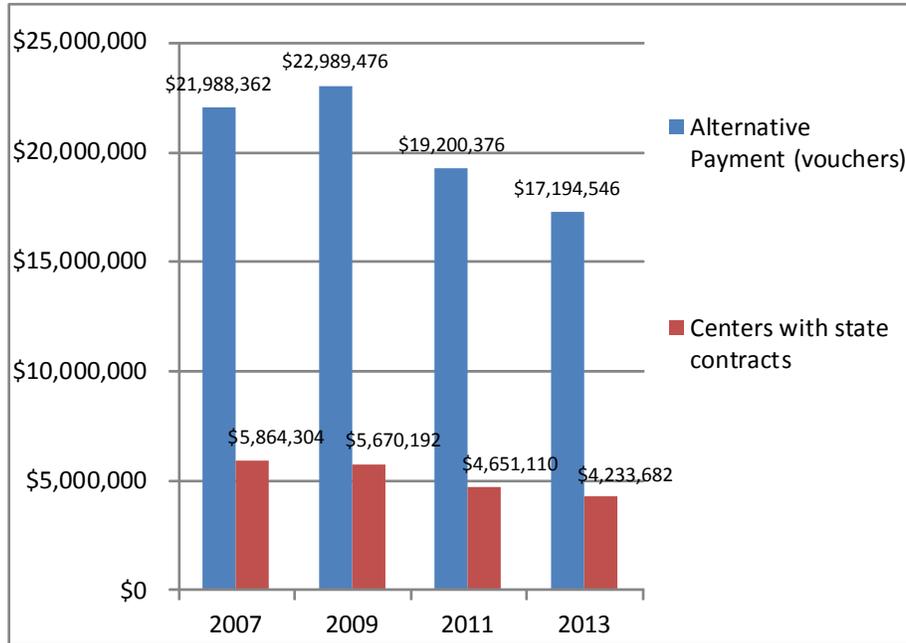


Serious child mental health problems are costly — not only in terms of the quality of life for the children and their families. Solano’s rates of hospitalization for children with mental health issues is only 1.9 per thousand for children ages 5 to 14, and 7.8 per thousand for children ages 15 to 19, significantly below the statewide average. However, in Solano County, children are far more likely to be hospitalized for “Mental Diseases and Disorders” than for ANY other diagnosis. 12% of hospital discharges carry this diagnosis. The next most common reason for hospitalization, asthma, is infrequent by comparison — only 4.3 %. This pattern suggests that critically needed effective prevention and early intervention services, services that could intervene before a hospitalization is needed, are not readily available to impacted families in Solano.<sup>37b</sup>

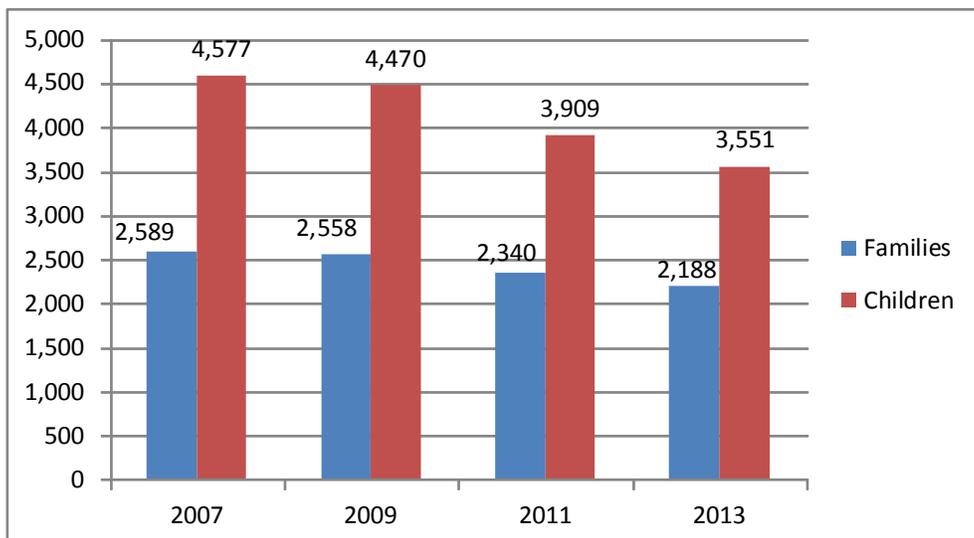
## Child Care

Repeated drastic cuts in state funding for child care and development programs have impaired many parents' ability to earn a living for their families and deprived low-income children of critically important experiences that promote healthy development and educational success.

### Decline in state funding for child care programs<sup>38</sup>



### Decline in number of families and children served in alternative payment (voucher) child care programs<sup>38</sup>

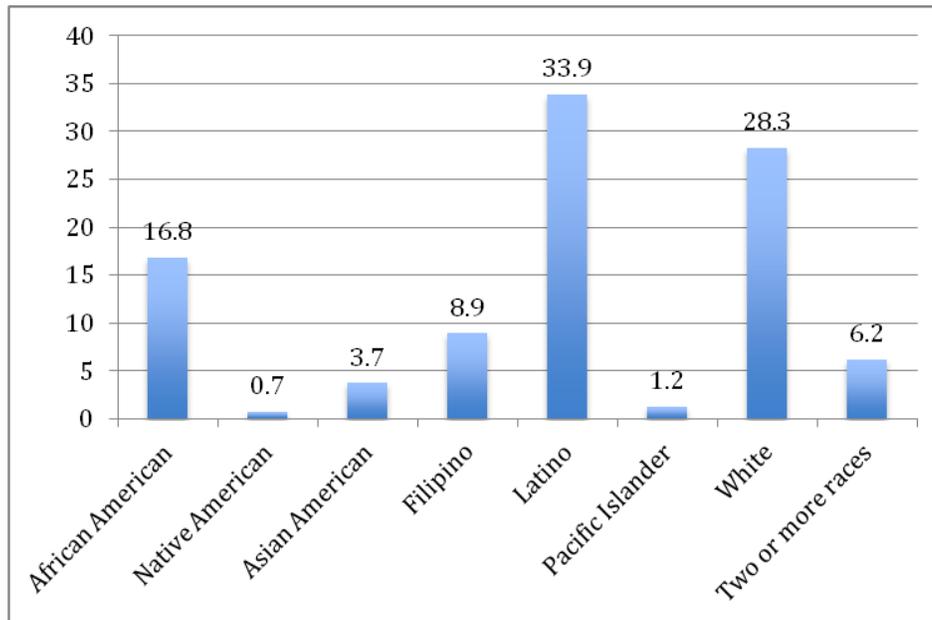


## Enrollment in Solano School Districts <sup>39</sup>

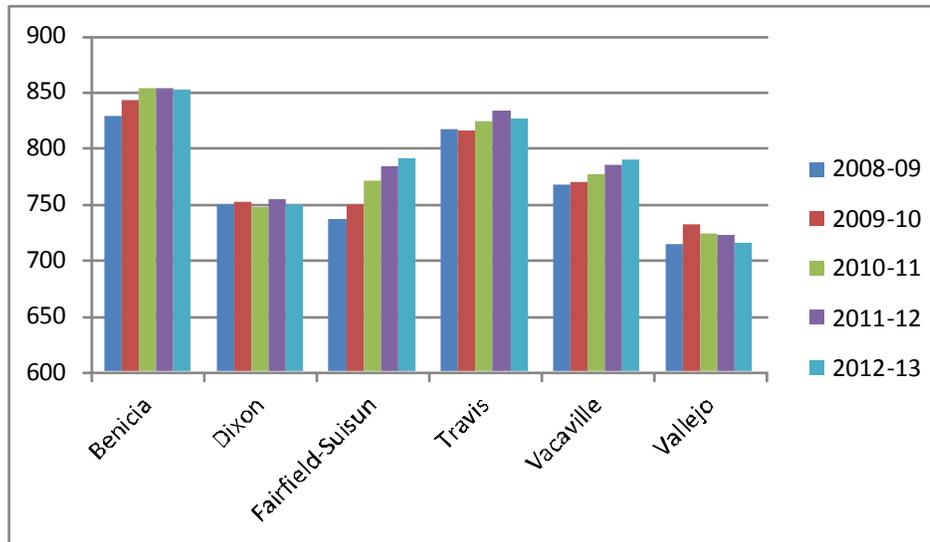
District	Schools	Students
<u>Benicia Unified</u>	8	4,927
<u>Dixon Unified</u>	8	3,406
<u>Fairfield-Suisun Unified</u>	30	21,574
<u>Sbe - Dixon Montessori Charter</u>	1	394
<u>Solano County Office Of Education</u>	4	482
<u>Travis Unified</u>	10	5,503
<u>Vacaville Unified</u>	17	12,459
<u>Vallejo City Unified</u>	26	15,080
Total		63,825

Data for Rio Vista is not included because Rio Vista is part of the River Delta Unified School District, a Sacramento County district, and doesn't appear in Solano County data from the California Department of Education

## Percentage of Solano students in each ethnic group 2012-2013 <sup>40</sup>



**Academic Performance Index scores by district, 2008-2009 to 2012-2013 <sup>41</sup>**

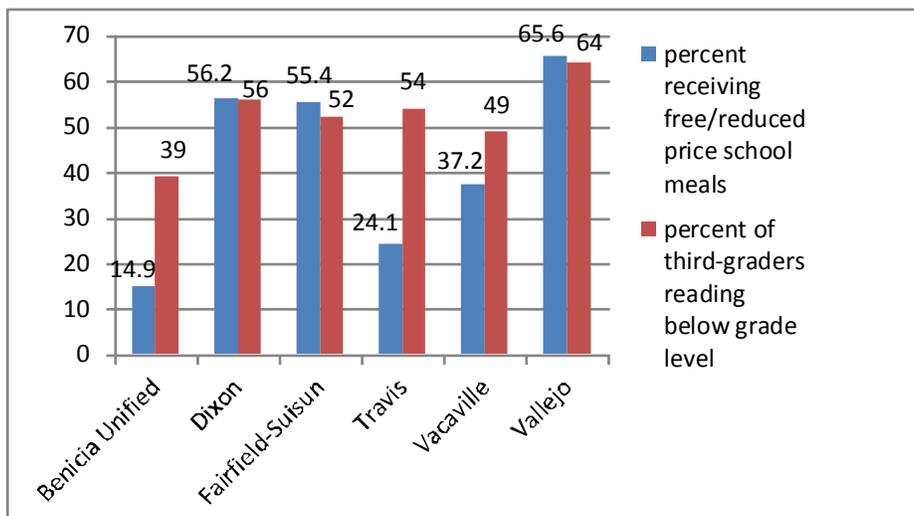


In general, Solano school scores have gone up, but there is variation among districts, not only in the scores but in the amount of improvement.

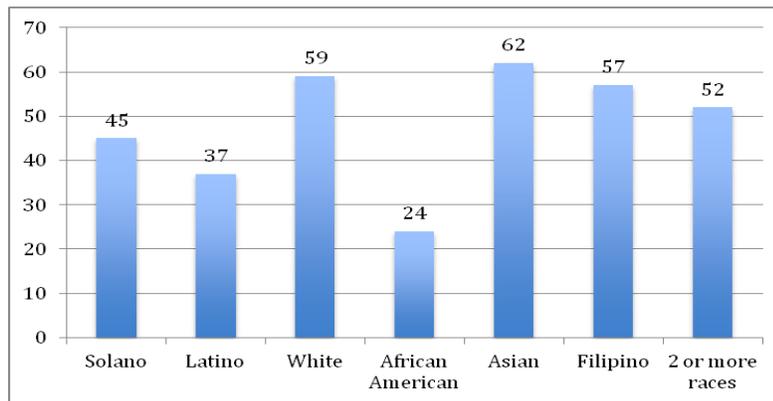
**Reading level relates to poverty**

There also appears to be a very real correlation between high incidence of economic stress and high levels of children who are unable to achieve adequate reading levels by third grade, as can be seen in the chart below. Families with economic challenges have a more difficult time providing the kind of environments and supports conducive to learning. The exception seems to be Travis, but it may be that military families are experiencing other, equally challenging stressors.

**Percent of third graders reading below grade level compared to percent of students receiving free/reduced price school meals, 2012-2013. <sup>42</sup>**

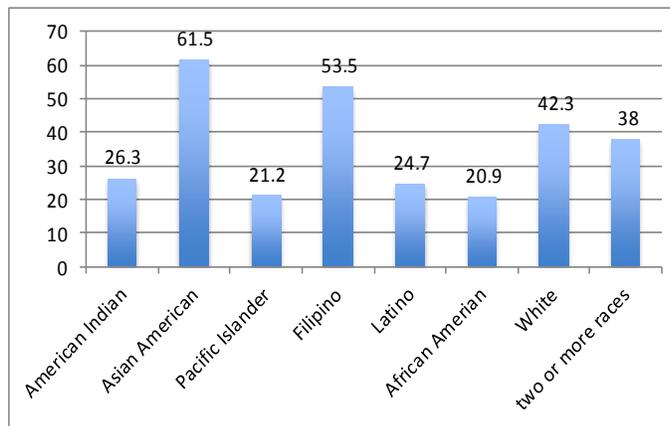


**Percentage of seventh graders scoring at or above grade level in math 2012-2013<sup>43</sup>**

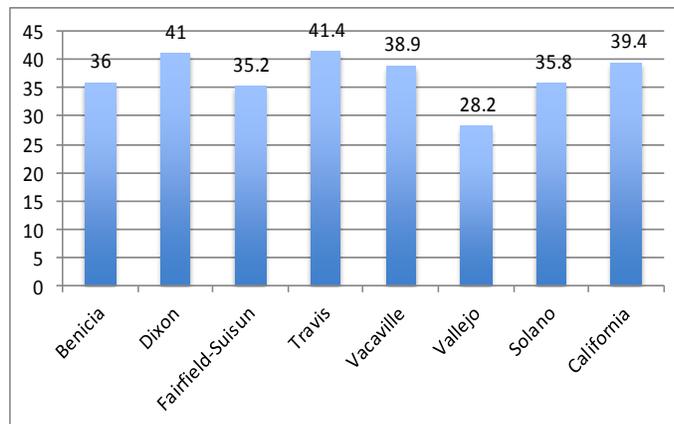


**Percentage of high school graduates meeting UC/CSU requirements 2012-2013<sup>44</sup>**

**By ethnicity**



**By district**



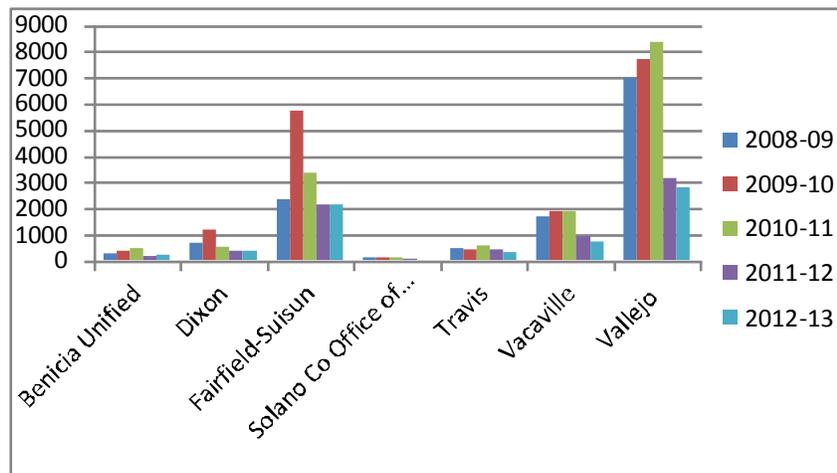
Solano schools in general have done an impressive job of reducing the student dropout rate in the last few years — overall the dropout rate in the county had dropped by about one-third. This chart traces the dropout rate for each graduating class of students. For example, countywide, 21.9 % of the students who should have graduated in 2010 dropped out at some point during high school. For the class of 2013, that rate was down to 13.5%. The dropout rate went down in every identified ethnic group. However, major disparities among ethnic groups remain in this area and in ensuring those students who do graduate can meet the requirements for admission to the University of California or California State University systems.

**Percentage of students in each ethnic group who dropped out before finishing high school <sup>45</sup>**

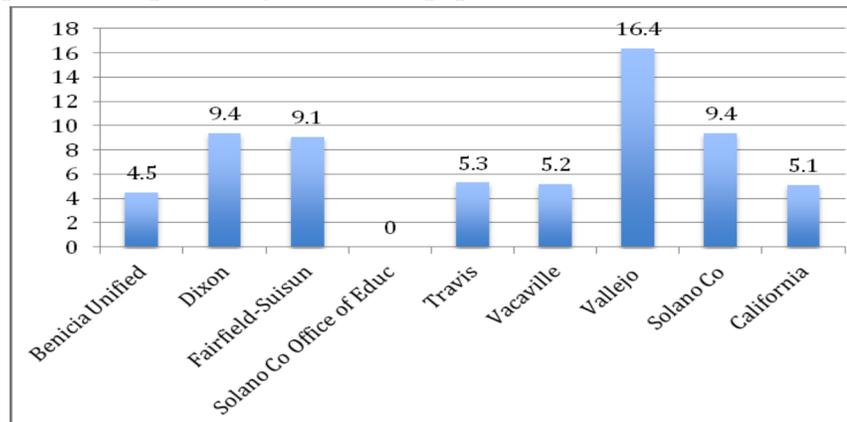
	2009-2010	2010-2011	2011-2012	2012-2013
<b>Latino</b>	28.4	26.1	21.2	17.7
<b>American Indian</b>	27.9	9.5	16.3	22.4
<b>Asian American</b>	14.5	12.1	9.4	6.7
<b>Pacific Islander</b>	24.7	28.6	29.2	17.5
<b>Filipino</b>	15.1	11	9.4	8.5
<b>African American</b>	33.5	30	25.3	22.2
<b>White</b>	13.6	13.3	9.6	8.2
<b>Two or more races</b>	8.3	9.8	7.9	6.1
<b>Not reported</b>	51.9	66.7	89.5	57.1
<b>Solano County</b>	21.9	19.9	16.3	13.5

Solano school districts have also been very successful in reducing the use of suspension as a method of discipline, since recent research has shown that suspensions reduce school achievement and increase the risk of later problems. Solano schools have been cutting their suspension rates by introducing more positive forms of discipline such as restorative justice.

**Suspensions by district, 2008-2013<sup>46</sup>**



**Suspensions as percentage of student population, 2012-2013 <sup>47</sup>**



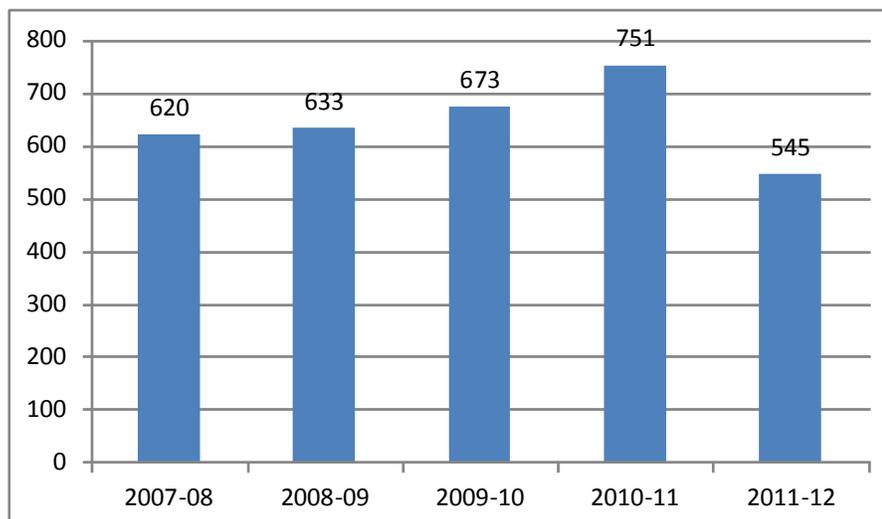
# Child Safety

## Child Abuse Prevention

Many categories of maltreatment seemed to increase during the recession – possibly because of increased family stress -- then dropped after intensive community-based and home-visiting services were made available through family resource centers and partner agencies, beginning in 2011. Solano County Child Welfare Services introduced Intensive Family Maintenance Services in 2012 which focused on maintaining children in the home and preventing placement into foster care. In all years, by far the most common form of maltreatment is general neglect, which often results from the parent being overwhelmed by stress, the demands of work, and poverty.

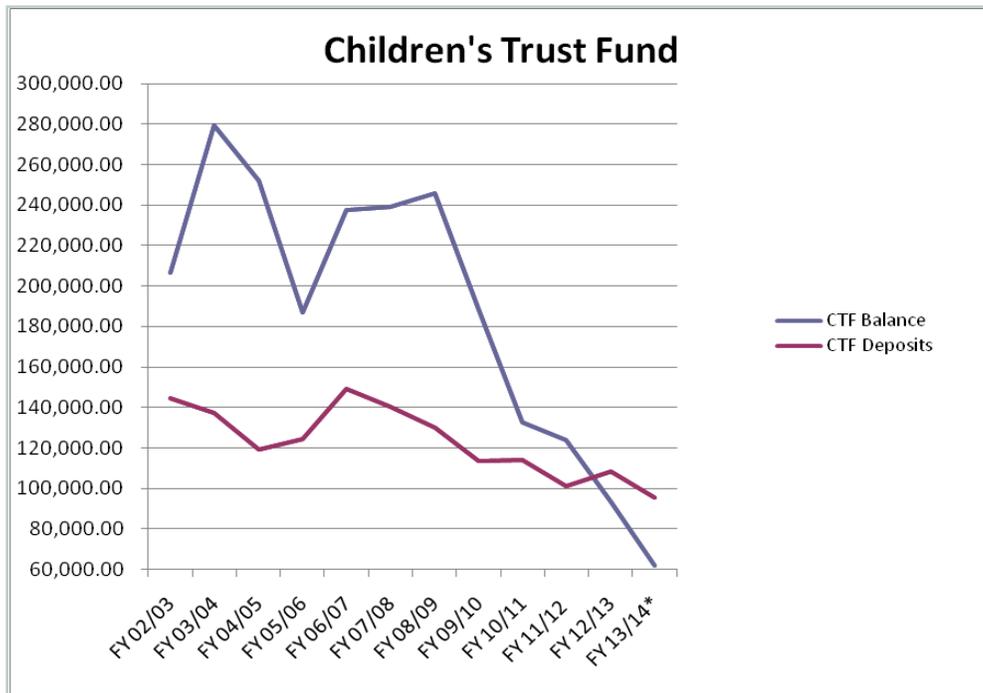
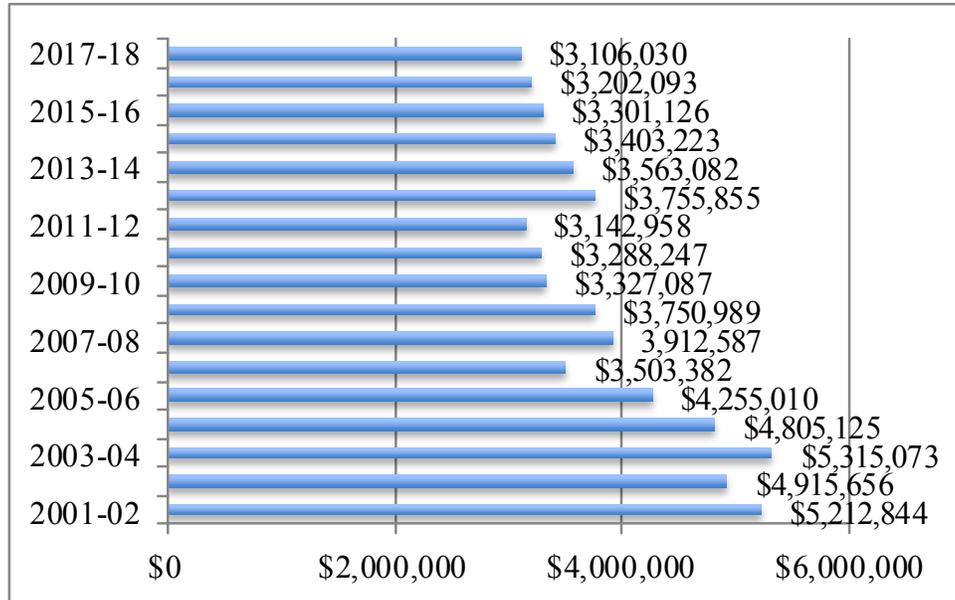
*“Researchers and policymakers have long recognized that children living in families with limited economic resources are at higher risk for maltreatment than children from higher socioeconomic strata . . . [M]odest increases in income within an economically disadvantaged population reduced the risk of a [substantiated] report of child maltreatment.”*

**Total substantiated reports of child maltreatment, 2007-2012 <sup>49</sup>**



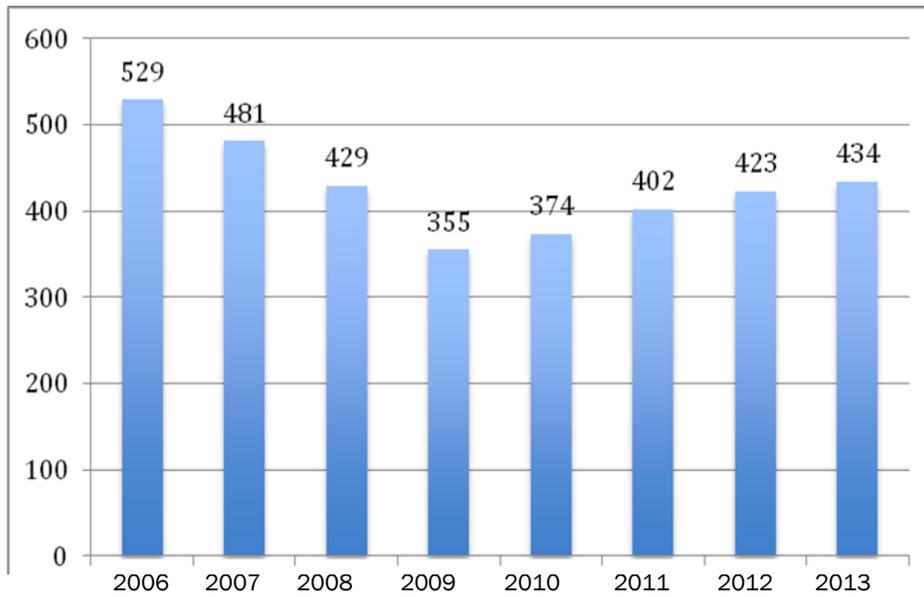
Success in reducing child maltreatment is in danger of being reversed as funding for family support services that previously helped families keep their children safe at home have been eroding significantly. One small example is the Solano Children’s Trust Fund, which is dedicated exclusively to community-based child-abuse-prevention services. Revenues to this fund have dropped about 50% since just before the recession. First 5 Solano revenues have also been dropping significantly. As the chart on the next page shows, revenues anticipated for First 5 Solano for 2014-2015 are almost \$2 million less than when funding was at its peak in 2003-2004. Couple these losses with the serious loss of child care funding (see page 21), funds which often serve families at risk of abuse, and it’s clear that at the same time families are struggling with an increase in poverty and the associated stress, resources to support vulnerable families have been cut back severely, and many vulnerable children are simply not being served.<sup>50</sup>

### Allocations to First 5 Solano Children and Families Commission



\*estimated

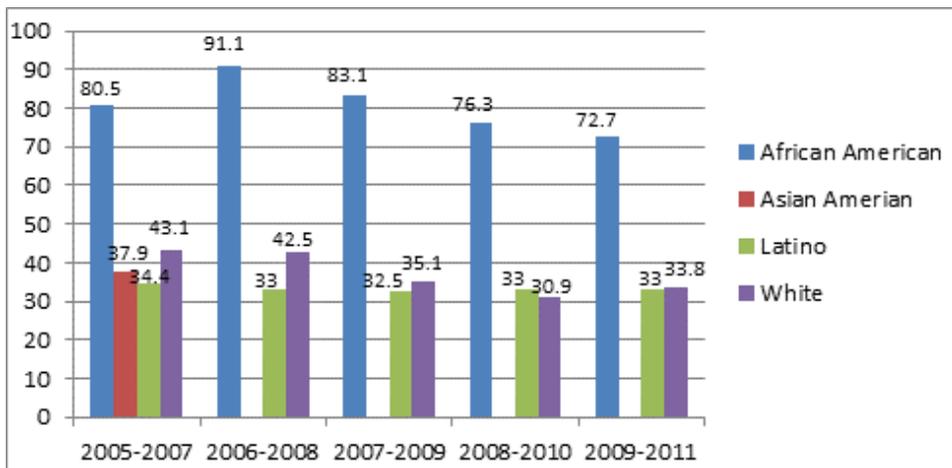
### Children in out-of-home care <sup>51</sup>



Out-of-home placements in Solano County declined from 529 in October 2006 to a low of 355 in October 2009 and then began a steady climb up to 434 in 2013. This trend was not reflected statewide or among some surrounding counties. At the state level and in surrounding counties (Alameda, Contra Costa, Sacramento and Yolo), out-of-home placements fell from October 2006 until October 2012 and then rose in October 2013. Some surrounding counties, including Napa and Sonoma, saw similar trends as Solano County. All counties showed an increase in out-of-home placement for 18- to 21-year-old young adults. Factors that might have contributed to Solano County's earlier rise in out-of-home placements include loss of Child Welfare Services (CWS) staff and increased family stressors (foreclosure rates, unemployment, etc). However, recently CWS has been given additional resources to expand its intensive efforts to the Family Reunification Program with the goal to reunify children that enter foster care sooner rather than later.

### Childhood Fatalities

Child/youth deaths per 100,000, birth to age 24 - All Causes <sup>52</sup>



Note: Regrettably, our source did not have data on Asian Americans after 2007

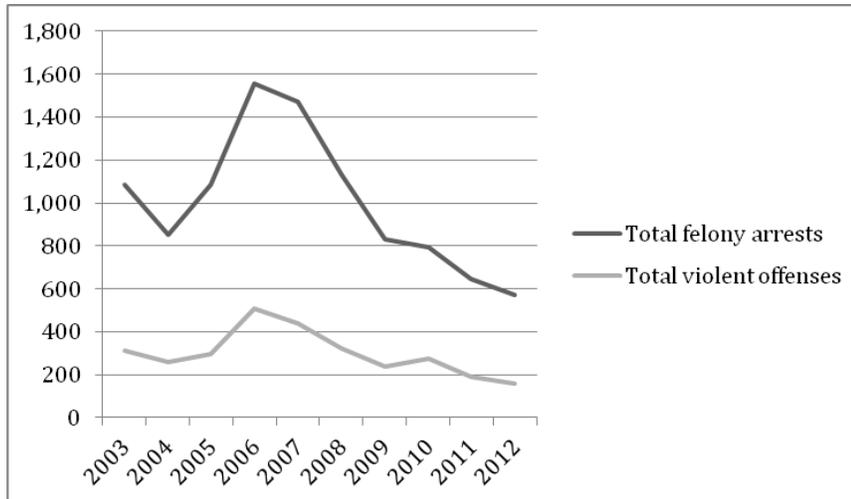
The overall rate of death for children and youth in Solano County declined slightly from 2005 to 2011, declining most in the African American population. But the rate of death for African American children and youth was still more than twice the rate for any other ethnic group.

## Juvenile Crime and Arrests

### Juvenile violent crime

Most juvenile arrests for felonies are not for violent crimes. From 2006-2012, juvenile arrests for violent offenses, including homicide, forcible rape, robbery, assault, and kidnapping accounted for 27% to 34% of all juvenile felony arrests in Solano County.

Juvenile arrests, for all felonies and for violent offenses, peaked in 2006. That year there were 507 juvenile arrests for violent crime, which steadily declined to 157 in 2012, a 69% decrease.<sup>53</sup>



Solano's patterns are similar in this regard to national patterns. Experts in the field believe this outcome is somewhat in part due to the improved early intervention programs such as diversion, and the increased use of evidence-based practices and programs, as opposed to relying only on supervision and monitoring.

Despite the significant drop in violent crime, in 2012, the total juvenile felony arrest rate in Solano County was 12.6/1,000 for youth ages 10-17, much higher than 8.8/1,000 statewide.

### Felony arrests among juveniles, Solano County, 2003-2012<sup>54</sup>

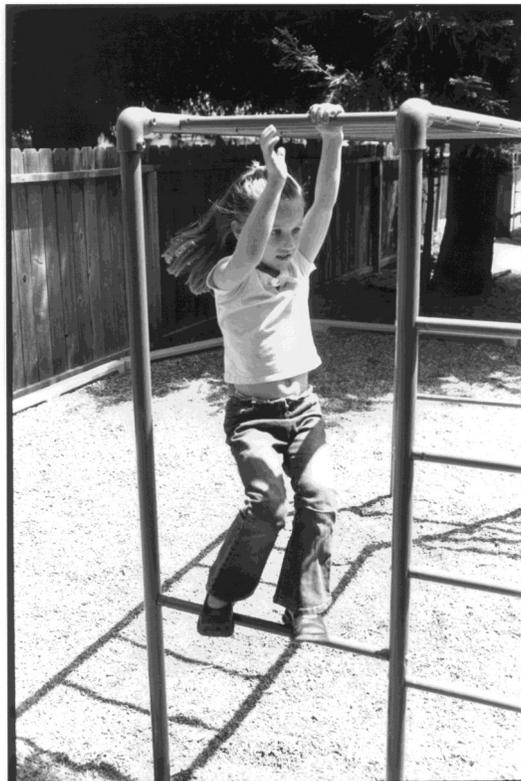
	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
<b>Total felony arrests</b>	1,084	854	1,083	1,557	1,474	1,132	830	793	647	571
<b>Total violent offenses</b>	310	261	298	507	440	325	239	273	189	157
<b>Homicide</b>	5	1	0	0	2	3	2	0	4	0
<b>Forcible rape</b>	6	9	5	8	8	7	6	8	2	3
<b>Robbery</b>	108	65	105	232	135	106	72	137	79	56
<b>Assault</b>	189	186	188	267	292	208	159	127	104	97
<b>Kidnapping</b>	2	0	0	0	3	1	0	1	0	1

**Juvenile violent offense arrest rate per 10,000 by city, 2010 <sup>55</sup>**

Fairfield	.38
Benicia	.27
Vacaville	.25
Vallejo	.24
Suisun	.14
Dixon	.11

**Juvenile Arrests, Total and Violent Offenses, Solano County, by City, 2006-2010 <sup>56</sup>**

	2006		2007		2008		2009		2010	
	Total	Violent								
<b>Benicia</b>	70	3	54	12	33	7	42	9	48	17
<b>Dixon</b>	29	8	44	9	40	19	34	8	8	6
<b>Fairfield</b>	345	126	383	151	346	98	290	91	236	109
<b>Suisun</b>	74	24	72	14	63	15	52	13	40	11
<b>Vacaville</b>	307	75	298	64	302	67	209	47	207	55
<b>Vallejo</b>	661	252	552	173	282	98	130	48	220	66



# Children's Alliance Recommendations

Solano County is benefitting from the end of the Great Recession. And we can take pride in the fact that children and families are also benefitting from our recent efforts to increase access to health care, to improve education, and to reduce child maltreatment and juvenile crime. At the same time many of our families are struggling to make ends meet, and programs that support children and families have been devastated by recession-era budget cuts. We must maintain the gains we have achieved. But now we also need to step up to a whole new level of commitment and action to make sure that Solano County improves the care and nurturing of our future — our children. We can start with the following steps:

- A. Recognize and acknowledge that many of the challenges our children face -- from poor school attendance and high dropout rates to family violence to high rates of infant mortality -- have their roots in the economic and social stressors of families and, in particular, our high rate of childhood poverty.
- B. Advocate for restoration of funding and expansion for early intervention and developmental services for infants and children, child care and pre-school funding.
- C. Expand availability of and access to mental health services for children.
- D. Support efforts to improve and promote children's safety.
- E. Support legislative and budget efforts to provide continued funding for services to foster and homeless youth.
- F. Support family strengthening services that keep children safely in their homes and out of the child welfare and criminal justice systems.
- G. Make Children, Youth and Families a priority by including them as a category in the priority issues section of the Board of Supervisors State & Federal Legislative Platform.
- H. Support increasing the minimum wage, to ensure more families are able to meet their economic needs.
- I. Invest in safety-net programs to help reverse the increase in the number of children living in poverty.
- J. Partner with local government and private institutions to raise the visibility of, and donations to, Solano's Children's Trust Fund.
- K. Support additional resources that need to be identified and secured for comprehensive high-quality early education; family support programs; youth tutoring, mentoring and recreational opportunities; and food and nutrition programs.
- L. Invest in programs that assure all children are receiving the food, shelter, and early educational opportunities they need to grow to be happy, healthy, and productive members of our community.
- M. Support the development of a children's ballot measure to ensure long-term sustainable funding for programs for children and families.

# Endnotes

- 1 California Employment Development Department, Labor Market Information
- 2 *ibid.*
- 3 All information in this paragraph from Index of Economic and Community Progress, posted March 2013, <http://www.solanocounty.com/civicax/filebank/blobdload.aspx?blobid=12633>
- 4 Vallejo Times-Herald, 2/26/14, citing data from CoreLogic
- 5 Vallejo Times Herald, 4/30/14
- 6 US Census Bureau, American Community Survey
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- 9 Solano County Department of Child Support Services.
- 10 [www.feedingamerica.org/mapthegap](http://www.feedingamerica.org/mapthegap), citing data from the American Community Survey and the Bureau of Labor Statistics
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- 25 Braveman, P and Barclay, C, "Health Disparities Beginning in Childhood: A Life-Course Perspective," Pediatrics 2009;124;S163
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- 28 Kidsdata, citing: California Dept. of Finance, [Race/Ethnic Population with Age and Sex Detail, 1990-1999, 2000-2010, 2010-2060](#); California Dept. of Public Health, Center for Health Statistics, Birth Statistical Master Files; Centers for Disease Control & Prevention, Natality data on CDC WONDER; Martin et al. (2013), Births: Final Data for 2012. National Vital Statistics Reports, [62\(9\)](#) (Mar. 2014).
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- 30 KidsData, citing California Dept. of Public Health, Center for Health Statistics, Birth Statistical Master Files <http://www.apps.cdph.ca.gov/vsq/default.asp> (Mar. 2014)
- 31 Kidsdata, citing California Dept. of Public Health, Center for Health Statistics, Birth Statistical Master Files <http://www.apps.cdph.ca.gov/vsq/default.asp> (Mar. 2014)
- 32 *ibid.*

- 33 [http://healthpolicy.ucla.edu/health-profiles/Child\\_Teen/Documents/2009/Counties/Solano.pdf](http://healthpolicy.ucla.edu/health-profiles/Child_Teen/Documents/2009/Counties/Solano.pdf)  
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- 34 California Department of Education, Dataquest
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- 36 California Healthcare Foundation, Mental Health Care in California: Painting a Picture, 2009  
<http://www.chcf.org/~media/MEDIA%20LIBRARY%20Files/PDF/M/PDF%20MentalHealthPaintingPicture.pdf> HSRI, TAC, and Charles Holzer, California Mental Health Prevalence Estimates (Sacramento, Ca: Department of Health Care Services),
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- 37b Kidsdata.org, topics 290 and 715
- 38 For Alternative Payment funding: Solano Child and Family Services. For state contract funding: California Department of Education CATS reports
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- 42 California Department of Education, DataQuest, 2013 STAR results, California Department of Education Dataquest 2013
- 43 California Department of Education, DataQuest, 2013 STAR results
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- 49 California Child Welfare Indicators Project Reports. Retrieved 3/18/2014 from University of California at Berkeley website. URL: [http://cssr.berkeley.edu/ucb\\_childwelfare](http://cssr.berkeley.edu/ucb_childwelfare)
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- 54 California Dept. of Justice, Criminal Justice Statistics Center, Monthly Arrest and Citation Register (MACR) Data Files; CJSC published tables. California Dept. of Finance, Race/Ethnic Population with Age and Sex Detail, 1990-1999, 2000-2010, 2010-2060.
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- 56 California Department of Justice, Criminal Justice Statistics Center, Retrieved from [http://oag.ca.gov/crime/jt\\_cjsc/2010](http://oag.ca.gov/crime/jt_cjsc/2010)





*A united voice*  
**Children's  
Network**  
*for the children of Solano County*

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