H&SS INDICATORS

A Bi-Monthly Look at Health & Social Service Trends Shaping Solano County

DECEMBER 2005

POVERTY IN SOLANO COUNTY

Poverty is difficult to measure. According to the 2000 Census, 8.3% of Solano County residents lived below the poverty line in 1999. Since, then, official estimates for poverty in Solano County have fluctuated from year-to-year. For the nation as a whole, poverty has increased. For Solano County, estimates of the number of people living in poverty reached nearly 10% of the County's total population in 2003 but fell by almost one-third to 6.2% in 2004. The current actual poverty rate is probably somewhere in between the estimates for the two years. Some 30,000 people and 5,000 to 6,000 families live in poverty. Nearly as many people live in near poverty — with incomes that are only 50 to 75 percent higher than the poverty line. (For a discussion of the limitations of recent Census Estimates, see Page 8.)

It should be noted, of course, that the same income standard is used to gauge poverty for the entire continental United States. For a family of four, the current poverty line is $19,350. (See *Poverty Guidelines* on page 5.) That means that even though the Bay Area is one of the most expensive places to live in the nation, the same income is used to measure poverty as in less expensive regions. For Solano County, this means that the poverty rate is even further from meeting the cost of living than in most of the rest of the country. (See Box.)

This edition of H&SS INDICATORS takes a detailed look at poverty data from the US Census for Solano County. Measuring poverty is important for a number of reasons. The poverty rate provides a sense of a community's overall economic well-being. Many of the state and federal programs that H&SS administers are tied to the poverty rate. Income must be at or below the poverty line or be some increment of the official poverty guidelines. Finally, poverty is often correlated with a number of social ills and health problems. These include child abuse or neglect, poor performance in school, a variety of chronic illnesses, lower life expectancy, crime, and teen pregnancy among other conditions.

> The United Way of the Bay Area calculated that the amount needed by a family of four to make ends meet in Solano County (for 2004) ranges from $55,295 to $71,947 depending on the age of the children. Nearly 3 to 4 times the official poverty line for a family of four in 2005 — $19,350.

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Families Living in Poverty

POVERTY STATUS IN 1999 SOLANO COUNTY	Total	Below Poverty	% Below Poverty	US	CA
All Individuals	378,431	31,344	8.3%	12.4%	14.2%
Children Under 18	109,328	11,852	10.8%	19.8%	24.1%
Adults	233,592	17,257	7.4%	11.1%	13.0%
Senior Adults 65 & Over	35,511	2,235	6.3%	9.9%	8.1%
All Families	98,163	5,963	6.1%	9.2%	10.6%
Married w/Children Under 18	41,144	1,676	4.1%	6.6%	9.7%
Married No Children Under 18	33,334	638	1.9%	3.3%	3.3%
Single Father w/Children Under 18	4,666	618	13.2%	17.7%	19.6%
Single Mother w/Children Under 18	11,881	2,618	22.0%	34.3%	32.5%

Source: 2000 Census.

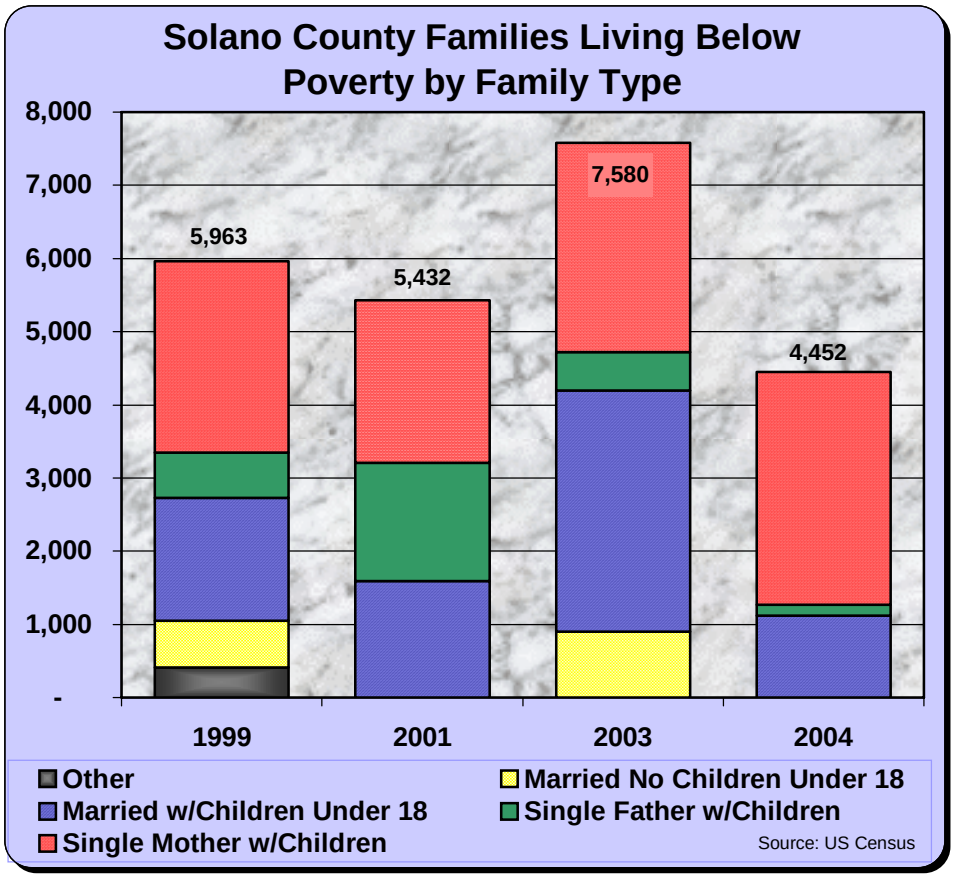
POVERTY STATUS IN 2001 SOLANO COUNTY	Total	Below Poverty	% Below Poverty	US	CA
All Individuals	385,389	32,575	8.5%	12.1%	12.8%
Children Under 18	110,249	15,266	13.8%	17.7%	18.6%
Adults	239,249	20,263	8.5%	11.1%	11.5%
Senior Adults 65 & Over	39,160	2,735	7.0%	9.6%	7.9%
All Families	95,688	5,432	5.7%	9.2%	9.7%
Married w/Children Under 18	36,170	1,595	4.4%	6.0%	8.4%
Married No Children Under 18	35,730	-	0.0%	3.3%	2.8%
Single Father w/Children Under 18	5,003	1,614	32.3%	16.1%	17.4%
Single Mother w/Children Under 18	12,128	2,223	18.3%	27.3%	31.4%

Source: 2001 American Community Survey. Household Population Only. Excludes population living in institutions & group quarters.

POVERTY STATUS IN 2003 SOLANO COUNTY	Total	Below Poverty	% Below Poverty	US	CA
All Individuals	392,431	37,999	9.7%	12.7%	13.4%
Children Under 18	107,727	15,906	14.8%	18.1%	18.5%
Adults	244,144	19,027	7.8%	11.5%	11.8%
Senior Adults 65 & Over	40,560	1,652	4.1%	9.5%	7.6%
All Families	102,423	7,580	7.4%	9.8%	10.5%
Married w/Children Under 18	40,838	3,300	8.1%	6.6%	8.7%
Married No Children Under 18	35,160	900	2.6%	3.3%	3.0%
Single Father w/Children Under 18	5,359	522	9.7%	18.0%	19.5%
Single Mother w/Children Under 18	11,903	2,858	24.0%	36.5%	34.1%

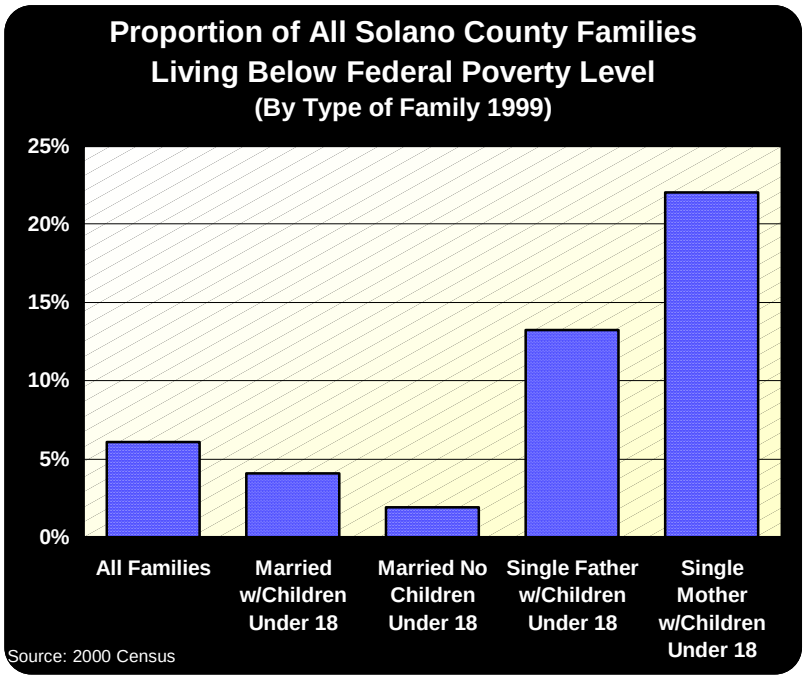
Source: 2003 American Community Survey. Household Population Only. Excludes population living in institutions & group quarters.

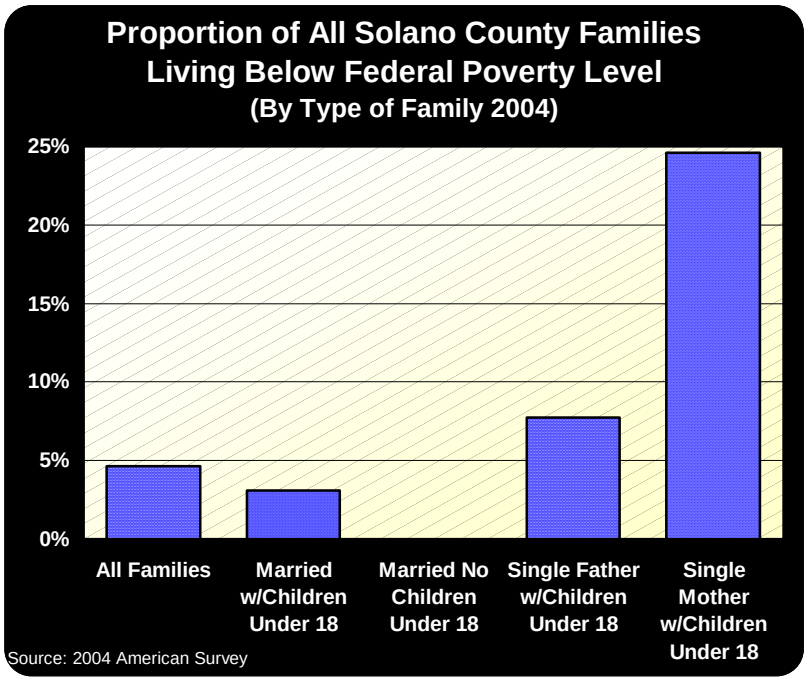
POVERTY STATUS IN 2004 SOLANO COUNTY					
	Total	Below Poverty	% Below Poverty	US	CA
All Individuals	393,924	24,616	6.2%	13.1%	13.3%
Children Under 18	111,625	8,597	7.7%	18.4%	18.9%
Adults	243,598	14,060	5.8%	11.6%	11.9%
Senior Adults 65 & Over	38,701	1,959	5.1%	9.4%	7.8%
All Families	96,058	4,452	4.6%	10.1%	10.5%
Married w/Children Under 18	36,189	1,116	3.1%	6.9%	9.0%
Married No Children Under 18	35,199	-	0.0%	3.3%	3.2%
Single Father w/Children Under 18	1,974	153	7.8%	18.2%	17.4%
Single Mother w/Children Under 18	12,950	3,183	24.6%	37.6%	34.2%
Source: 2004 American Community Survey. Household Population Only. Excludes population living in institutions & group quarters.					



HOW MANY FAMILIES ARE LIVING BELOW THE FEDERAL POVERTY LEVEL?

BY AVERAGING the four years of data (1999 Actual and 2001, 2003 and 2004 estimates), 6 percent of all Solano County families would have incomes below the poverty line. This translates into roughly 6,000 out of a total of 100,000 Solano County families living below the poverty line.





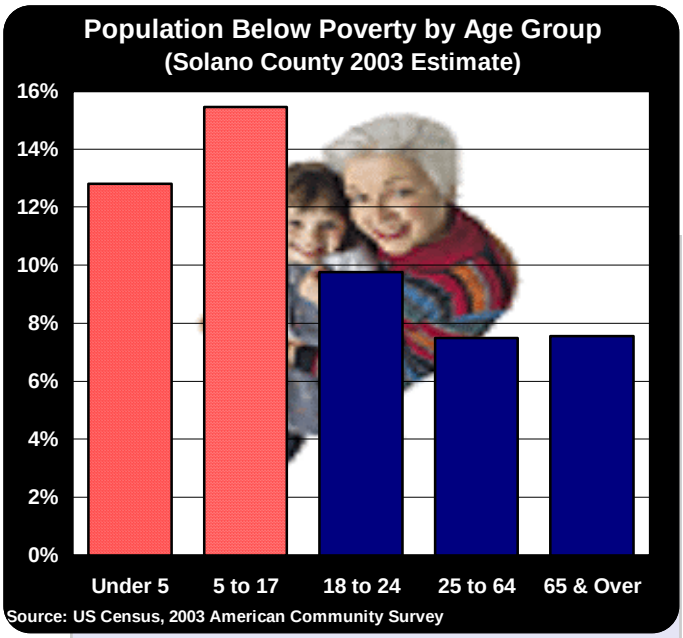
Poverty is most likely to affect women and children. Nearly one out of every four households headed by a single mother with children under the age of 18 lives in poverty.

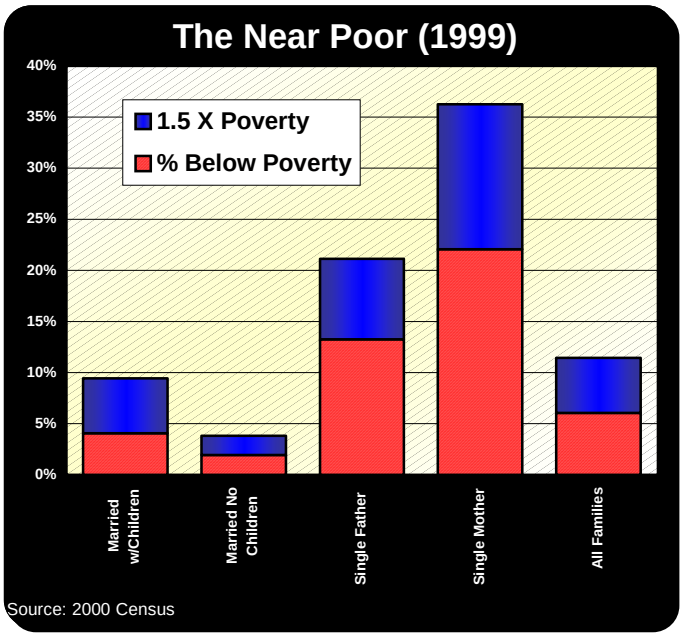
Two-parent households are much less likely to live in poverty than single parent households of either gender.

Children are the group most affected by poverty. Children are 2 times more likely to live in poverty than adults. Children comprise 28 percent of the County's population but account for 38 percent of all Solano County residents living in poverty.

Households headed by single mothers with incomes above poverty are also more likely to be lower income. More than a third of all such households had incomes below 150 percent of poverty in 1999. [Opposite Page]

Seniors are the group least impacted by poverty.

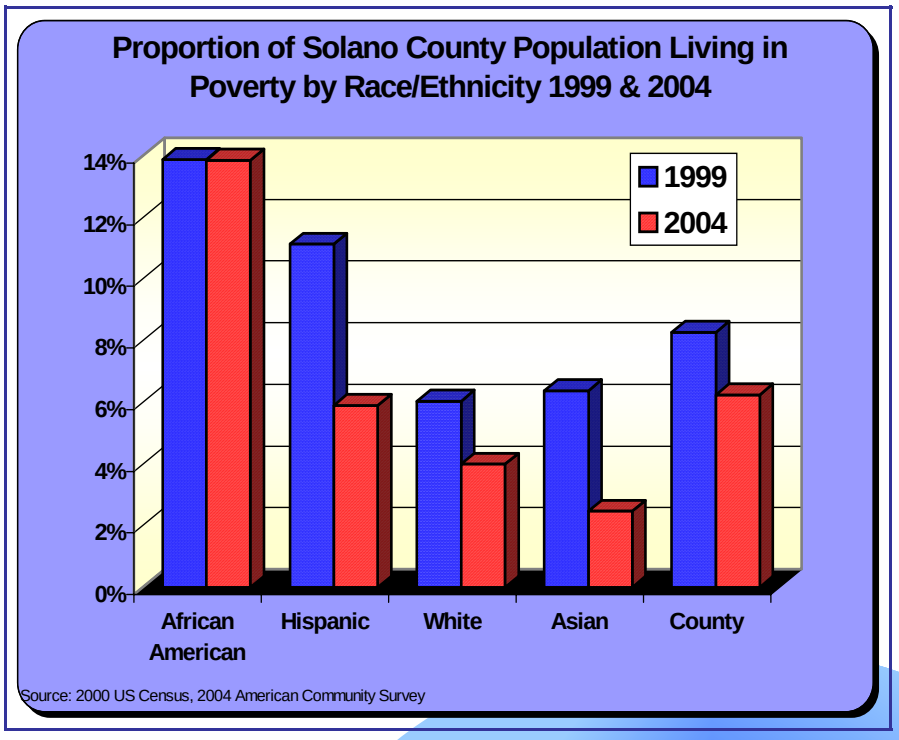




Poverty Guidelines

Family Size	1999	2002	2005
1	$ 8,240	$ 8,860	$ 9,570
2	$11,060	$11,940	$12,830
3	$13,880	$ 15,020	$16,090
4	$16,700	$ 18,100	$19,350
5	$19,250	$ 21,180	$22,810

DEMOGRAPHICS OF POVERTY



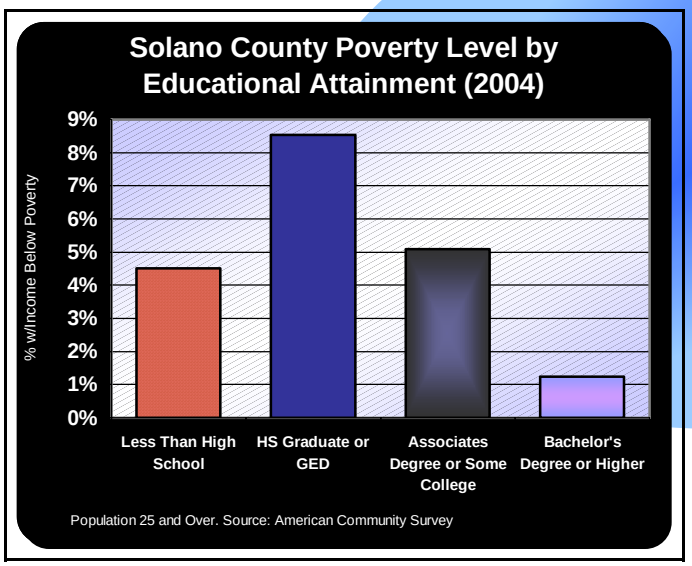
African Americans are more likely to live in poverty than other ethnic groups.

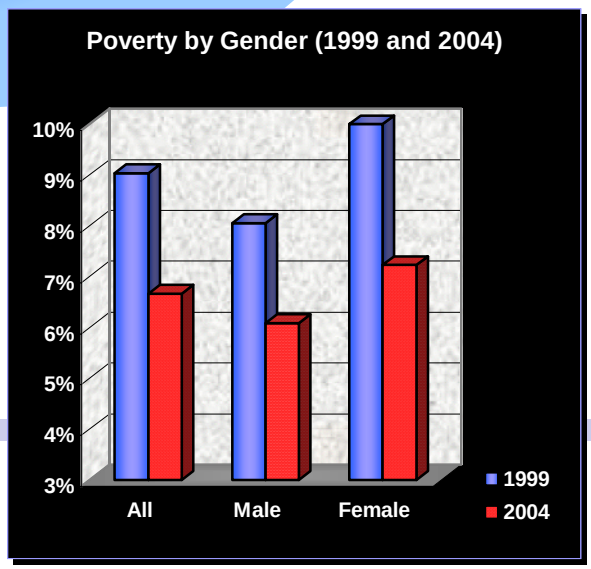
Between 1999 and 2004, poverty fell for all groups except African Americans.

According to the 2004 American Community Survey, there is a clear correlation between education and poverty status.

The 2004 data does show one anomaly in that the proportion of persons without a High School diploma has a lower rate of poverty than individuals who did graduate High School or attend some college. This may be due to two reasons: Many of these individuals may still be living at home with their parents or the lower 2004 poverty rate may be due to the exclusion of individuals who are institutionalized or live in group quarters or college dormitories.

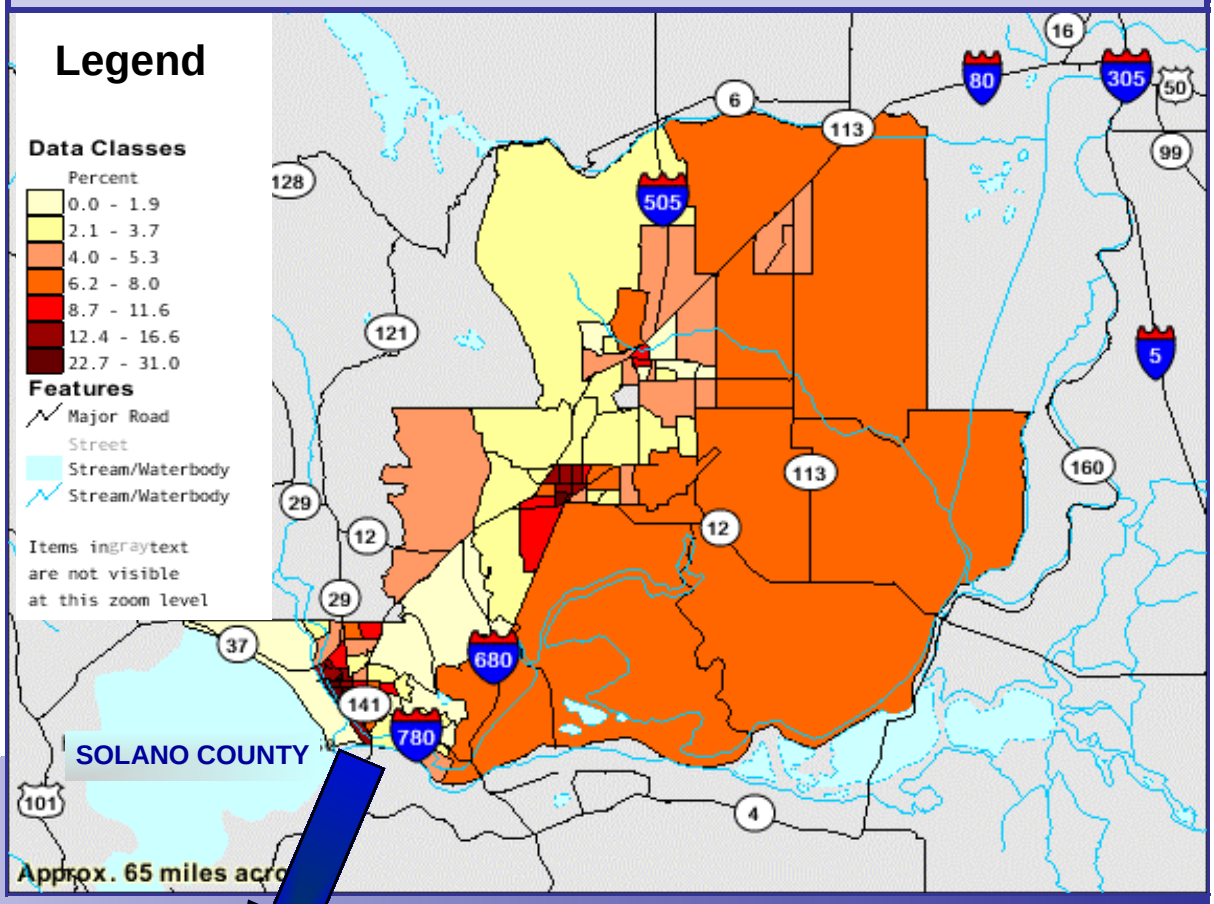
Women are more likely to live in poverty then men.

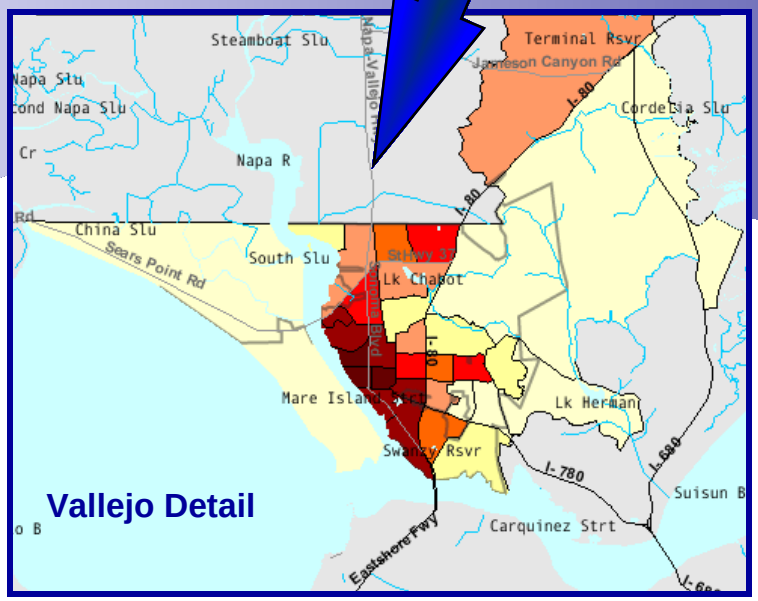




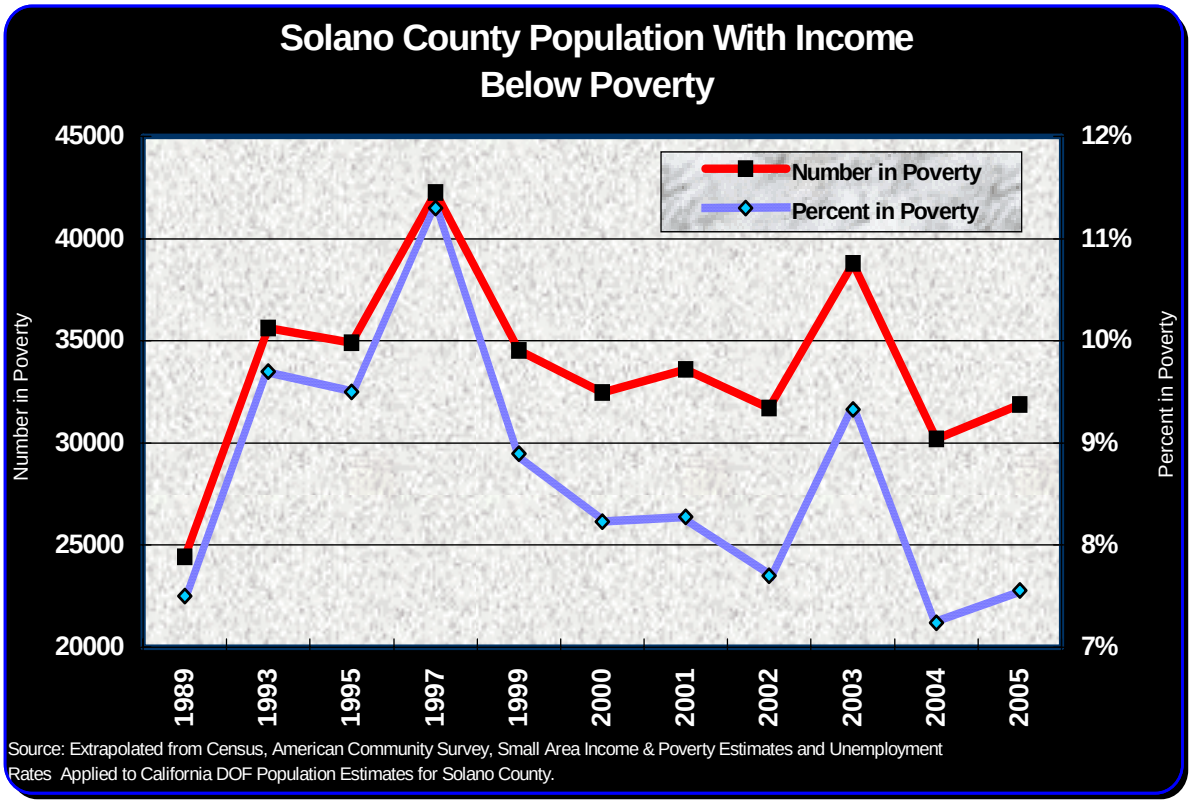
GEOGRAPHY OF POVERTY

PERCENTAGE OF FAMILIES WITH INCOME BELOW POVERTY IN SOLANO COUNTY 1999 (2000 CENSUS) BY CENSUS TRACT



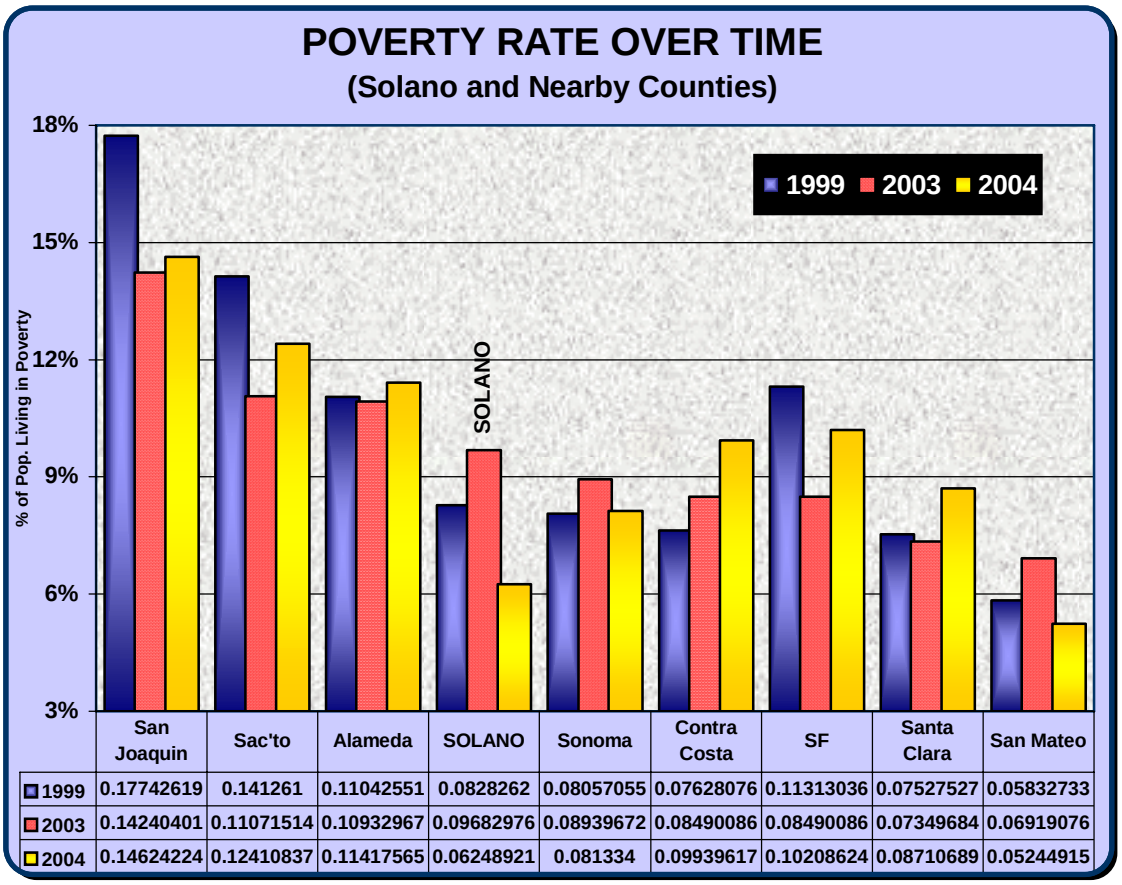


POVERTY ESTIMATES



In an attempt to estimate the number and proportion of persons living in poverty in Solano County and smooth out the fluctuations in the American Community Survey, data from the various models used to estimate poverty by the Census were analyzed along with census data, unemployment rates and population estimates made by the California Department of Finance.

A regression model was used to estimate the trend line for the percentage of the total population living in poverty. That percentage was then applied to the total county population as estimated by the Department of Finance.



	San Joaquin	Sac'to	Alameda	SOLANO	Sonoma	Contra Costa	SF	Santa Clara	San Mateo
1999	0.17742619	0.141261	0.11042551	0.0828262	0.08057055	0.07628076	0.11313036	0.07527527	0.05832733
2003	0.14240401	0.11071514	0.10932967	0.09682976	0.08939672	0.08490086	0.08490086	0.07349684	0.06919076
2004	0.14624224	0.12410837	0.11417565	0.06248921	0.081334	0.09939617	0.10208624	0.08710689	0.05244915

AMERICAN COMMUNITY SURVEY

The US Census Bureau began using the American Community Survey (ACS) after the 2000 census. The ACS is a new nationwide survey designed to provide communities with up-to-date annual information about how they are changing. The ACS collects information from U.S. households similar to what was collected on the Census 2000 long form on an annual basis. Data is available for communities of 250,000 or more (including Solano County).

The ACS is a systematic stratified survey of the population and is therefore subject to margin of error. Another important limitation is that the ACS applies only to the household population. Persons living in institutions or group quarters are not included. The institutionalized population generally has a higher incidence of poverty than the household population.

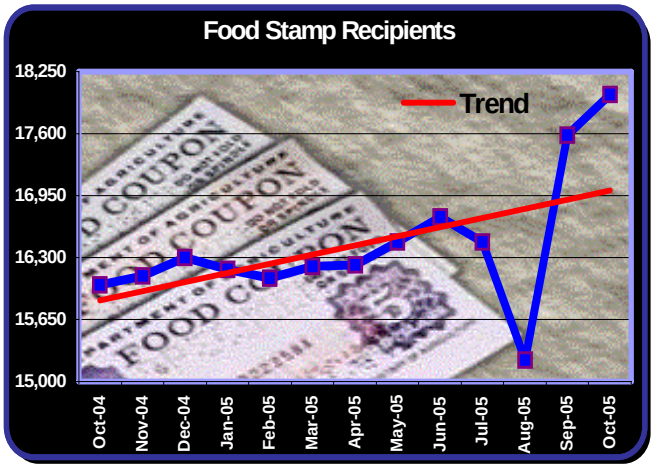
Eventually, the ACS is supposed to include some 3 million households but for 2004, about 800,000 households were surveyed nationwide. Data is not yet available for communities smaller than 250,000 because the sample size is not large enough to obtain valid information. However, when fully implemented, data will be available for communities of 20,000 and greater population.

The fluctuations in Solano County's poverty numbers may be due to the still small sample size used for the ACS. Data would appear to be more accurate for larger jurisdictions such as states and large metropolitan areas than for cities and counties with populations closer to the 250,000 threshold.

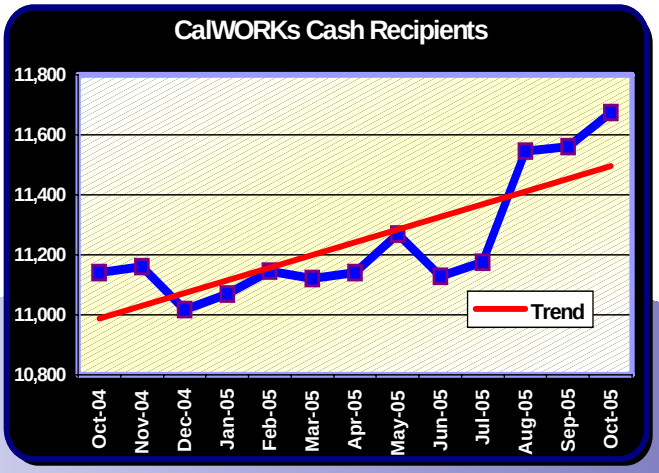
The number of persons living in poverty in Solano County may or may not have fallen as dramatically as reported between 2003 and 2004. On the one hand, the fact that poverty increased nationwide and in most nearby counties between 2003 and 2004 suggests that poverty probably did not decline dramatically in Solano County. On the other hand, it is possible that demographic groups less likely to live in poverty are coming to Solano County such as more two parent/two income households moving into Solano County due to the relative lower cost of housing or more older adults with stable incomes living in places such as Leisure Town or Trilogy.

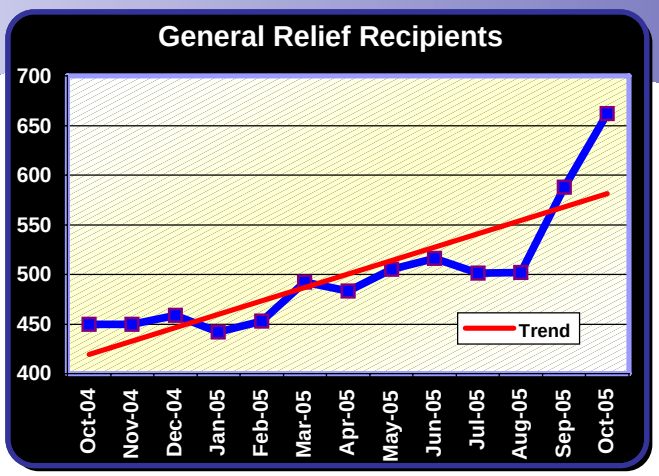
The findings from the 2005 ACS will be released next August or September and may help to provide a clearer assessment of poverty trends in Solano County.

H&SS INCOME SUPPORT PROGRAMS



- All H&SS income support programs have increased over the past year. (The decline in Food Stamp recipients between June and September may be due more to the switch to CalWIN then to an actual drop in clients.)
- Between October 2004 and October 2005, the number of CalWORKs cash recipients increased 4.8 percent, Food Stamp recipients increased 12.5 percent, and General Relief recipients rose by 47.1 percent. The number of clients for the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) increased by 1.5 percent.





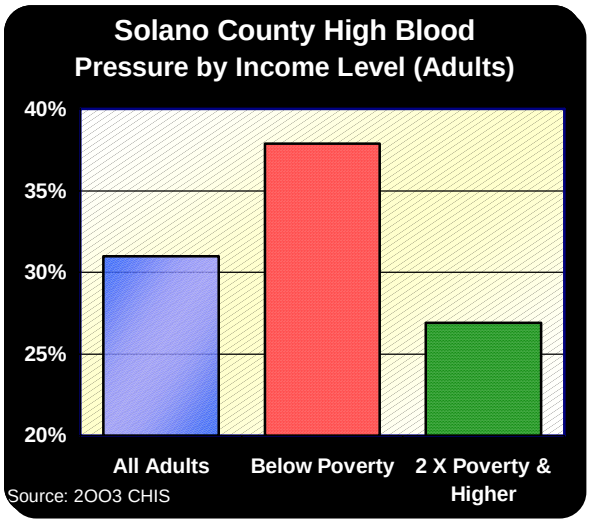
POVERTY & HEALTH

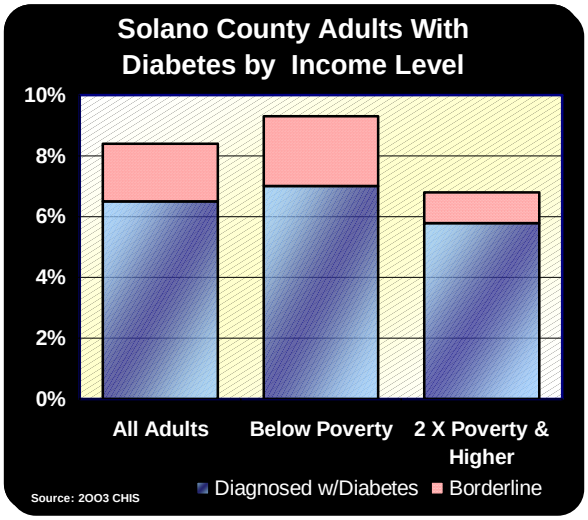
There appears to be a strong link between poverty and poor health outcomes. The correlation may be more indirect than direct. Individuals and families with lower incomes may be less likely to have health insurance or, if they have insurance, delay seeking medical care because they are unable to afford co-payments.

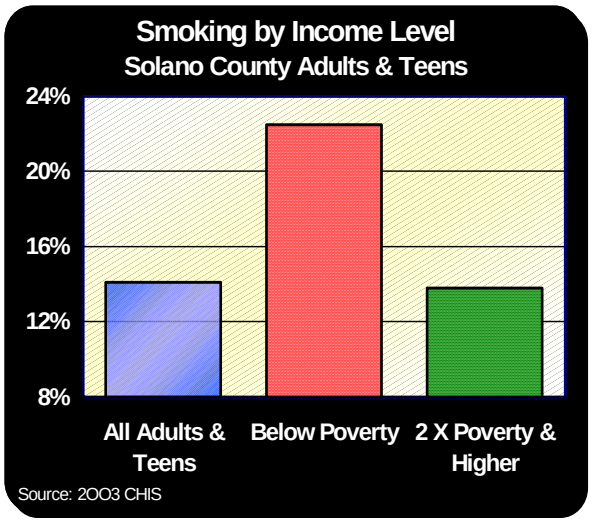
Other related factors are probably also involved including the fact that a lower income may make it more difficult to afford a proper diet. A lack of education may also be a factor.

A look at data from the 2003 California Healthy interview Survey (CHIS) shows that lower income adults are much more likely to have high blood pressure than upper income adults. Disparity also exists with diabetes — although the difference is not as great.

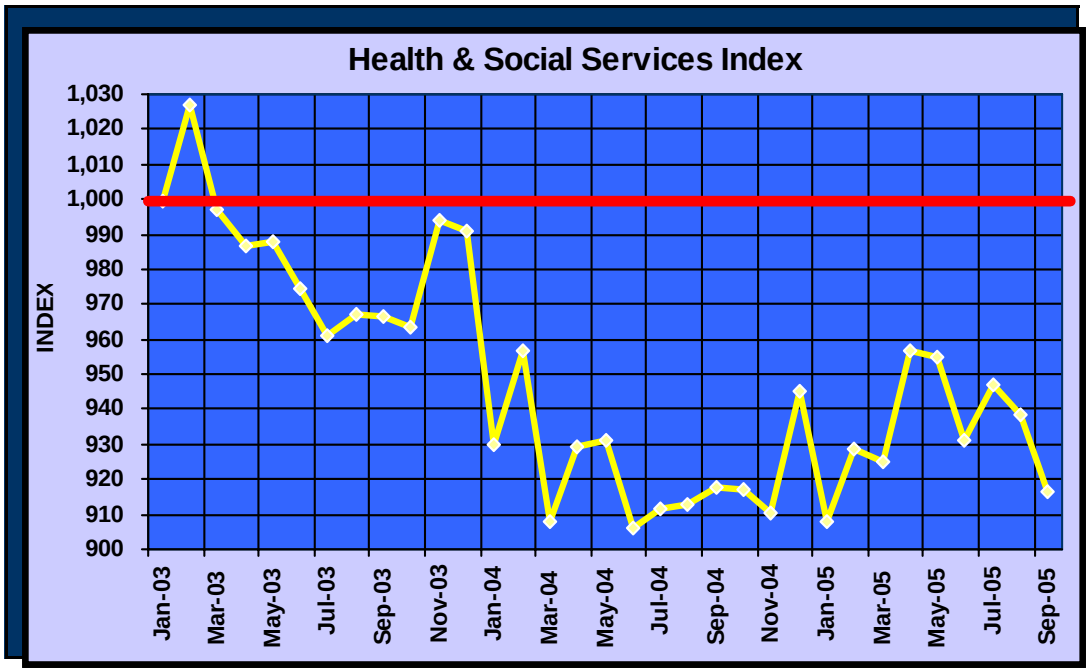
Lower income persons also exhibit less healthy behaviors. Individuals with incomes below poverty were nearly twice as likely to smoke as those with incomes twice or more of the poverty threshold.







H&SS INDEX



The **Health & Social Services (H&SS) Index** fell sharply in September continuing a downward trend that began in July. Although the number of unemployed and the number of Medi-Cal recipients both decreased, a majority of the other indicators went up. Overall, 10 of the 16 indicators increased. In particular, the number of food stamp recipients rose sharply. The food stamp increase appears related to the implementation of CalWIN. Since CalWIN went into effect, the number of food stamp recipients has risen. More recent numbers now appear more accurate than prior to implementation of CalWIN on July 1st.

The index combines workload data from 15 key services provided by H&SS, along with data on unemployment in Solano County, to provide a monthly indicator of community demand for health and social services.

All of the monthly numbers are added together and converted into an index score with January 2003 as the index bench line figure of 1,000. Like the Dow Jones, higher scores suggest positive developments — fewer people looking for work or requiring the services that H&SS provides, for example. Falling numbers suggest increasing need for H&SS's services.