FAMILY & YOUTH

On most measures of income, Cherokee County does not fare as well as peer counties and falls significantly below state and national averages. As indicated in Table F2, the latest U.S. Census data indicates that 24% of families with children in Cherokee County have incomes below the federal poverty level (see Table F1). Of the county's children, 26% live below the poverty level.

Both the median household income and median family income for Cherokee County is below the state medians, the national medians and the medians for peer counties. The same holds true for mean per capita income.

The children living in poverty indicator represents the percentage of children age 17 and under living in families with incomes that fall below the federal poverty level. Children who live in poverty experience significant obstacles to education and health and are characterized by other predictors of persistent poverty. Other accepted indicators of economic circumstances for children include secure parental employment and food security. National data for these indicators are available; however, disaggregated data for Cherokee County and peer counties must be inferred from other measures at this time.

Table F1. 2009 Federal Poverty Guidelines for the 48 Contiguous States (In effect until March 31, 2010)

Persons in Family	Poverty Guideline*
1	$10,830
2	$14,570
3	$ 18,310
4	$ 22,050
5	$25,790
6	$29,530
7	$33,270
8	$37,010

*** For families with more than 8 persons, add $370,740 for each additional person**

US Department of Health and Human Services

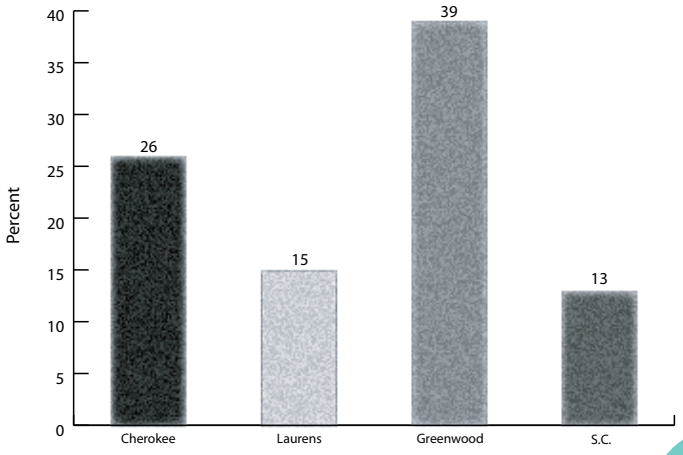
Table F2. Family Income Estimates, Select Data 2006-2008

	Cherokee	Greenwood	Laurens	S.C.	U.S.
Average household size	2.62	2.68	2.54	2.52	2.61
Average family size	3.32	3.29	3.03	3.09	3.20
Mean per capita income*	$18,389	$22,470	$19,003	$23,668	$27,466
Median household income*	$35,299	$41,306	$38,811	$44,326	$52,175
Median family income*	$45,593	$52,766	$47,693	$54,710	$63,211
Individuals below poverty level	19.1%	15.2%	18.9%	15.5%	13.2%
Families with children under 18 below poverty level	23.7%	18.8%	21.8%	18.3%	14.9%
Married-couple families	12.4%	4.1%	11.7%	6.4%	6.4%
Female householder, no husband present	46.3%	48.9%	41.7%	41.1%	36.5%
Households below poverty level	21.6%	14.3%	16.7%	15.1%	12.5%
Households below poverty level that receive food stamps	68.0%	55.1%	56.3%	60.0%	56.7%
Children under 18 living in poverty	26.4% (3,486)	22.0% (3,604)	28.0% (4,429)	21.8% (226,777)	18.2% (13,203,217)

*** in 2008 inflation-adjusted dollars**

U.S. Census

Figure F-A. Percent Increase in Numbers of Teen Pregnancies, 2004 to 2007



SC Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy

Cherokee County evidenced a higher increase in numbers of teen pregnancies from 2004 to 2007 than the state average and than in Laurens County. Greenwood County, however, had a higher percentage increase (Figure F-A).

Of all births in Cherokee County in 2006, 20.8% were to mothers under age 20. This is significantly higher than the state average and higher than the two peer counties. This hold true for all births, births to white mothers, and births to African-American mothers. In fact, only four counties in the state had greater percentages of babies born to teenage mothers (Table F4).

The negative consequences of teen childbearing are magnified with repeat pregnancies. Based on 2004 data, Cherokee County ranks 11th among the 44 South Carolina counties measured for repeat teen pregnancies. Peer counties fare substantially better with Greenwood ranking 30th and Laurens ranking 43rd. Statewide, the rate of repeat teen pregnancies has remained stable over the past decade as 27% of teen pregnancies in the state are to parenting teens. Further, 20% of teen mothers will have a second baby within three years after the birth of their first.

National data indicate that teen pregnancy rates have decreased substantially over the last decade in South Carolina and across the country. In SC, rates decreased by 14% between 1997 and 2007 overall; however, while rates between 1997 and 2003 decreased 22%, rates actually increased 10% between 2004 and 2007. In Cherokee County, the 2007 teen pregnancy rate among 15 to 17 year olds was significantly lower than it was in 1997, but higher than it was in 2004. The pregnancy rate for 18 and 19 year olds has increased consistently during the same time periods. Rates of teen Pregnancy continue to be significantly higher among African Americans than among whites (Table F3).

Table F3. Teen Pregnancy, Cherokee County: 1997, 2004, 2007

Total Number	1997	2004	2007	% change 2004-2007
Ages 10-19	177	152	192	+26%
Incidence Rate per 1,000	**1997**	**2004**	**2007**	**% change 2004-2007**
Ages 10-19	50.3	41.4	52.1	+26%
Black 10-19	52.3	55.3	72.3	+31%
White 10-19	49.4	36	43.9	+22%
Ages 15-17	71.8	42.9	51.8	+21%
Ages 18-19	127.4	148.6	167.1	+12%

S.C. Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy

Table F4. Percentage of Births to Mothers Under Age 20, 2006

SC County Rank (of 46)	County	All	White	African-American and Other
42	Cherokee	20.8	18.9	25.9
29	Greenwood	16.2	11.1	24.6
36	Laurens	18.5	15.5	25.1
	SC	13.4	10.7	18.3

SC Kids Count

FAMILY & YOUTH

Currently, South Carolina ranks eighth in the nation for the number of homicides caused by criminal domestic violence. More than 36,000 victims annually report a domestic violence incident to law enforcement agencies around the state. Over the past 12 years, an average of 33 women per year have been killed by their intimate partners. Attorney General Henry McMaster has named domestic violence as the number one crime problem in South Carolina.

According to the office of the S.C. Attorney General (2009), one criminal domestic violence homicide occurred in Cherokee County during 2008. None occurred in either Laurens or Greenwood counties that year. In 2003, Cherokee County ranked 13th among counties in the state for reported incidents of domestic assaults per population. The same year, Laurens County ranked 19th and Greenwood County ranked 7th.

In 2008, the SAFE Homes – Rape Crisis Coalition, an agency that serves Spartanburg, Cherokee and Union Counties, sheltered 343 victims of domestic violence and provided other services to 5,650 victims. As a group, local domestic violence programs in S.C. sheltered 4,382 victims in 2008 (up from 3,960 in 2007) and provided other services to 28,507 victims (up from 20,273 in 2007).

Although statewide comprehensive analysis of domestic violence data has not occurred since 2000, data from that time indicated that Cherokee County had a reported rate of domestic violence of 143.1 per 10,000 population. This is higher than the statewide rate of 138.3, but lower than peer county rates of 171.1 in Laurens County and 275.8 in Greenwood County (the highest rate in the state). The S.C. Department of Public Safety is in the process of updating domestic violence data for the past decade. Data release is expected by summer 2010.

In 2004, there were 529 domestic assaults recorded by law enforcement officials in the county. These comprised 26.3% of all assaults. Of all assaults, 14.7% involve spouse abuse, as do 56.0% of all domestic assaults.

Criminal domestic violence homicides:

In South Carolina in 2008 there were 32 people murdered by a household member. Of those:

- 26 (81%) were women and 6 (19%) were men
- 53% were black and 47% were white
- The average age of the victim was 45 years old
- Gunshot wound was the primary cause of death in 56% of cases

Numbers of domestic assaults, 2003:

Cherokee	531
Laurens	744
Greenwood	1,111

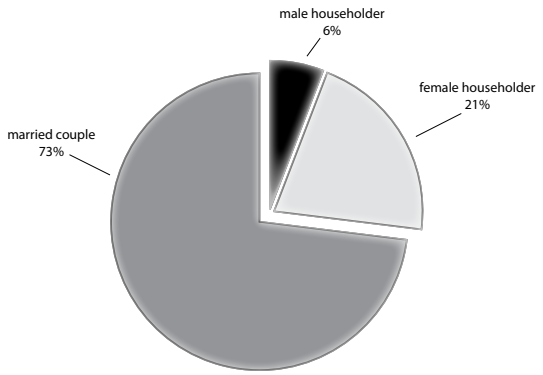
Table F6. Births to Single Mothers (including paternity-acknowledged), 2006

	% Babies born to Single Mothers	% White Babies born to Single Mothers	% AA or Other Babies born to Single Mothers
Cherokee	51.3	38.7	83.6
Greenwood	52.9	36.2	80.6
Laurens	54.6	41.5	82.9
SC	45.4	30.6	72.0

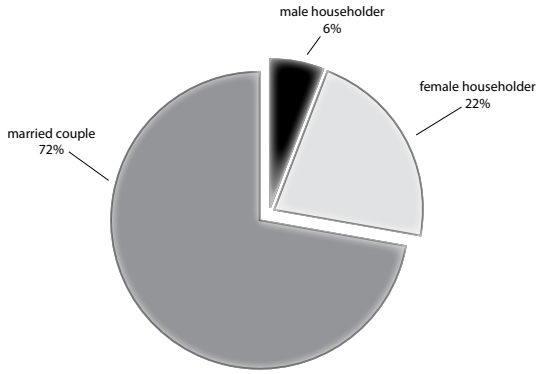
S.C. Kids Count

Another indicator of family composition is births to single mothers. In 2006, 51% of Cherokee County babies were born to single mothers. This is a lower rate than Laurens and Greenwood Counties, but higher than the state rate. There is a significant disparity by race for babies born to single mothers (Table F6) with 84% of Cherokee County's African American and other non-white babies born to single mothers and 39% of the county's white babies born to single mothers.

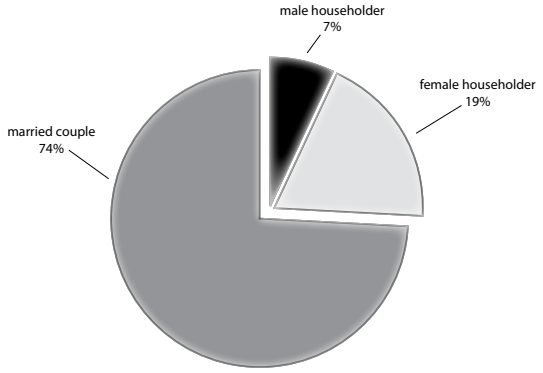
Families, Cherokee County, 2006-2008



Families, S.C., 2006-2008



Families, U.S., 2006-2008



Variables of family structure, including marital status of parents, sex of head of household, parity, and maternal age, are predictors of the economic and social welfare of families. Children who are the results of planned pregnancies, who are raised by both biological parents, and who live in low-conflict families have much better success in school. Likewise, divorce, for both the change in family structure and the change in family economic status, increases risk to children. Single mothers have significantly lower economic status than single fathers. Further, children with fewer siblings, and children who live in households of smaller size, tend to have higher cognitive and educational outcomes. Children of teenage mothers, compared to children of older mothers, have lower levels of cognitive and educational attainment.

Of children under age six who reside in families, 23.5% in Cherokee County live in households headed by single females. This is lower than the state (28.5%), but slightly higher than Laurens County (22.5%) and Greenwood County (22.3%).

For family households, Cherokee County has a lower percentage of family households headed by married-couples (61%)than peer counties, the state, and the nation. Likewise, Cherokee County has a higher percentage (33%) of family households headed by single females (Table F5).

Table F5. Households With Children, by Type, 2006-2008

	Married-Couple	Female Householder, no Husband Present
Cherokee	61.0%	32.5%
Laurens	62.9%	28.6%
Greenwood	67.5%	28.5%
SC	63.7%	29.7%
US	68.9%	23.8%

U.S. Census

FAMILY & YOUTH

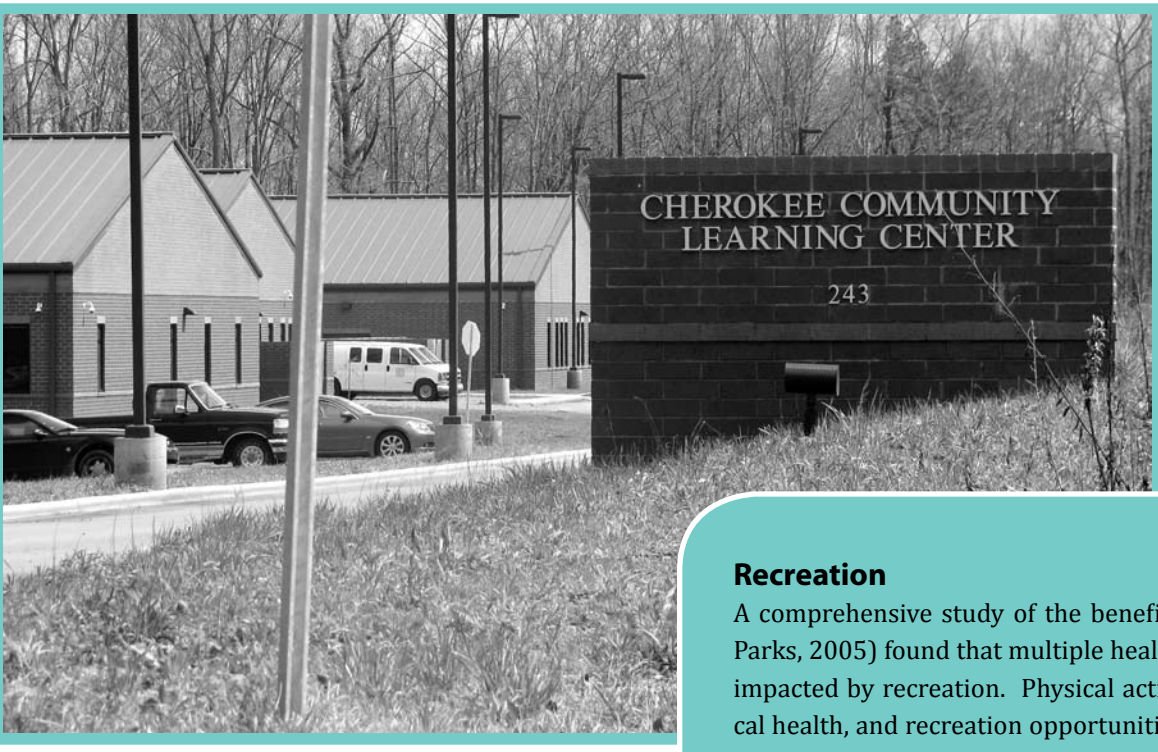
The Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System (YRBSS) is a program of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention that includes a national school-based survey of youth and young adults. Local survey outcomes can be compared to state and national data for the same measures. Table F7 provides some select data from the YRBSS for Cherokee County. Most remarkable of these data are the findings that 25% of high school students and 13% of middle school students have used illegal drugs in the past month. Both rates are above the state average for these student cohorts. Cherokee County students also report notable percentages of high school students and middle school students who have used alcohol in the past month (34% and 21%, respectively), and percentage of high school students who have engaged in binge drinking in the past month (18%).

Table F7. Select Self-Reported Risk Behaviors, Cherokee County Students, 2002

	PERCENTAGE		Cherokee County
	Cherokee County	S.C.	Rank *
High School Students who have used illegal drugs in the past month	24.8	20.1	28
7th and 8th who have used illegal drugs in the past month	12.5	9.5	26
High School Students who have used alcohol in the past month	33.6	37.1	11
High school students who drank 5 or more drinks at a time during the past month	18.4	18.9	18
7th and 8th graders who have used alcohol in the past month	20.4	21.0	14
7th-12 graders who have carried a gun or knife to school as a weapon	5.2	5.9	11
7th-12th graders who have been arrested and booked	0.0	4.0	1
7th-12th graders who have seriously considered attempting suicide	8.3	8.7	13

*** 16 counties do not participate in this survey. Ranking is of 30 remaining counties.**

SC Kids Count



Adult Education

The Cherokee County Adult Education Program served 802 students last year. Of these students, 56 earned GED Diplomas and 29 earned a Blacksburg or Gaffney High School Diploma. In addition to basic reading and math classes, offerings include high school diploma and GED preparation classes, English as a second language classes, and classes for students who need an upgrade in reading, math, and/or language prior to taking a college entrance exam. Employment-related classes include WorkKeys job skills assessment and improvement, resume writing, and interviewing skills. In the last year, students earned 69 Bronze, 118 Silver and 25 Gold S.C. Career Readiness Credentials based on the WorkKeys Assessment.

Recreation

A comprehensive study of the benefits of recreation (California State Parks, 2005) found that multiple health and social issues are positively impacted by recreation. Physical activity improves mental and physical health, and recreation opportunities increase the quality of life in a community through promoting social bonds and supporting youth and families. Because of their aggregate impacts, recreation services are widely viewed as one of the most cost-effective public services.

As of March 2010, the Cherokee County Recreation District listed 13 parks in Gaffney and five parks in Blacksburg. Amenities included tennis courts, picnic shelters, restrooms and concession stands, playgrounds, a swimming pool, softball and baseball fields, football fields, and basketball courts. Facility design has taken into account special needs of citizens by age group.

It is unclear how many acres of parkland are available in Cherokee County. A 2006 study of park acreage in neighboring Spartanburg County resulted in findings that there are only 2.44 acres of parkland per 1,000 residents of the County. This falls significantly short of the national average of 6.25 acres per resident.