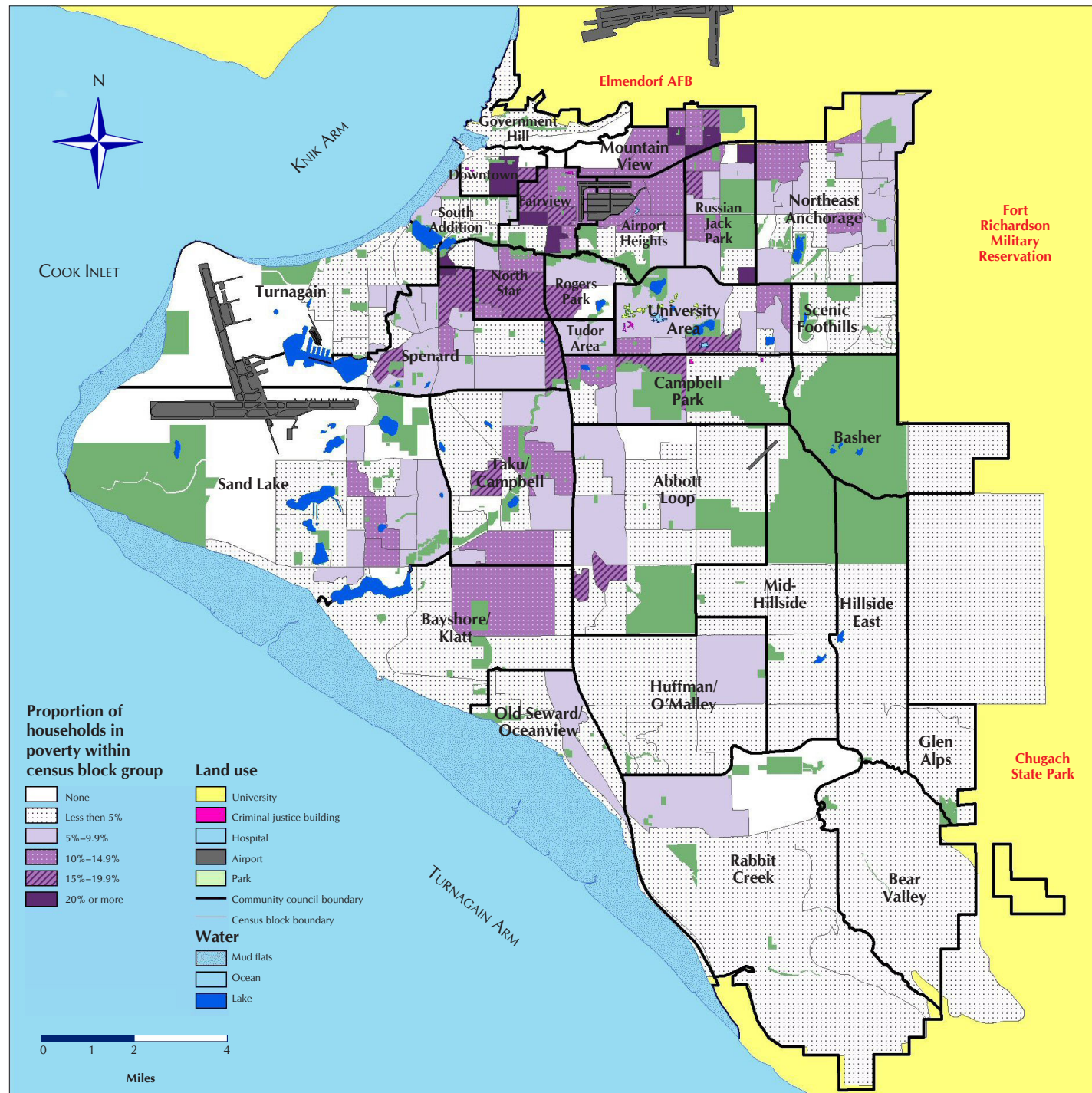




The Strength of Association: Neighborhood Poverty and Social Deviance



Proportion of Households in Poverty within Census Block Group, 2000

This issue of *Anchorage Community Indicators* represents the third installment of an ongoing study exploring the relationship between the *social structure* of Anchorage communities and *crime* (measured as the annual rate of *police calls-for-service* for various offenses). Using measures of *population density* and *housing density*, previous issues of the *ACI* explored the relationship between the “social density” of Anchorage neighborhoods and crime, finding that these two dimensions of social structure have no discernable impact on rates of social deviance.

In upcoming issues of the *ACI*, we will extend these previous studies by introducing another dimension of Anchorage’s social structure: “**economic well-being**.” We will measure economic well-being by developing community-level indicators of more “obvious” economic relevance like *workforce participation* and *income*, as well as more “subtle” indicators of well-being like the prevalence of households headed by a *single-parent* and those *receiving public assistance*. This particular issue examines the strength of association between neighborhood-level **poverty**, measured as the *percentage of households falling below the federally designated threshold of poverty* (see below for detailed description).

The first row of Table 1 shows poverty to be significantly related to a number of police calls-for-service

indicators. The rate of weapons offenses had the strongest correlation with neighborhood poverty, followed by drug-related calls-for-service, and serious property and violent crimes. Domestic violence calls-for-service were found to be only weakly associated with community rates of poverty. Rates of specific alcohol-related calls-for-service were not found to be related to neighborhood poverty. These simple measures of association (*not causation*) align with studies in other contexts which have found that communities experiencing economic hardship bear a double burden in that they also suffer a disproportionate amount of social problems.

These maps and the accompanying data are available on the Justice Center website (www.uaa.alaska.edu/just). Additional technical information about the data can be obtained by phone at 786-4885.

Table 1. Correlation Matrix: Neighborhood Poverty—Social Deviance

N in all cells = 188 block groups

	Neighborhood poverty rate	Social deviance measures					
		Domestic violence	Weapons offense	Drug offense	Alcohol offense	Serious property crime	Serious violent crime
Neighborhood poverty rate	1.000	.146 *	.399 **	.307 **	.129	.228 **	.242 **
Domestic violence	—	1.000	.521 **	.574 **	.577 **	.595 **	.627 **
Weapons offense	—	—	1.000	.750 **	.684 **	.777 **	.813 **
Drug offense	—	—	—	1.000	.853 **	.858 **	.875 **
Alcohol offense	—	—	—	—	1.000	.924 **	.939 **
Serious property crime	—	—	—	—	—	1.000	.930 **
Serious violent crime	—	—	—	—	—	—	1.000

* p < .05. ** p < .01.

Poverty

Following the Office of Management and Budget’s (OMB’s) Directive 14, the Census Bureau uses a set of **money income thresholds** that vary by family size and composition to detect who is “poor.” If the total income for a family or unrelated individual falls below the relevant poverty threshold, then the family or unrelated individual is classified as being “below the poverty level.”

The poverty thresholds are revised annually to allow for changes in the cost of living as reflected in the Consumer Price Index (CPI-U). The poverty thresholds are the same for all parts of the country—they are not adjusted for regional, state or local variations in the cost of living.

Poverty Status of Households in 1999

The data on poverty status of households were derived from answers to the income questions. The income items were asked on a sample basis.

Since poverty is defined at the family level and not the household level, the poverty status of the household is determined by the poverty status of the **householder** (the person, or one of the people, in whose name the home is owned, being bought, or rented). Households are classified as “poor”

Table 2. Poverty Thresholds in 1999, by Size of Family and Number of Related Children Under 18 Years

Size of family unit	Weighted average	Number of related children under 18 years									
		0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	7+	
One person	\$8,501										
Under 65 years	\$8,667	\$8,667									
65 years and over	\$7,990	\$7,990									
Two people	\$10,869										
Householder under 65 years	\$11,214	\$11,156	\$11,483								
Householder 65 years and over	\$10,075	\$10,070	\$11,440								
Three people	\$13,290	\$13,032	\$13,410	\$13,423							
Four people	\$17,029	\$17,184	\$17,465	\$16,895	\$16,954						
Five people	\$20,127	\$20,723	\$21,024	\$20,380	\$19,882	\$19,578					
Six people	\$22,272	\$23,835	\$23,930	\$23,436	\$22,964	\$22,261	\$21,845				
Seven people	\$25,912	\$27,425	\$27,596	\$27,006	\$26,595	\$25,828	\$24,934	\$23,953			
Eight people	\$28,967	\$30,673	\$30,944	\$30,387	\$29,899	\$29,206	\$28,327	\$27,412	\$27,180		
Nine people or more	\$34,417	\$36,897	\$37,076	\$36,583	\$36,169	\$35,489	\$34,554	\$33,708	\$33,499	\$32,208	

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, 1999, <http://www.census.gov/hhes/poverty/threshld/thresh99.html> (accessed January 26, 2005).

when the **total 1999 income of the householder’s family** is below the appropriate poverty threshold. (For non-family householders, their own income is compared with the appropriate threshold.) The income of people living in the household who are unrelated to the householder is not considered when determining the poverty status of a household, nor does their presence affect the family size in determining the appropriate threshold.