

Key Findings

THE MEASURE OF AMERICA SERIES

A PORTRAIT OF

LOS ANGELES

COUNTY 2026

Toward an Equitable Future for All Angelenos

[APortraitofLosAngelesCounty2026.pdf](#)

Key Findings

This report takes an in-depth look into well-being and opportunity in Los Angeles County, one of the most diverse places in the nation. This project is a follow-up to Measure of America's *A Portrait of Los Angeles County 2017*, which featured a ranked well-being index for different places and demographic groups in the County. The result of an impressive collaboration among a diverse range of stakeholders, the 2017 report laid out an ambitious set of goals to improve Angelenos' overall well-being and to address the inequalities laid bare by the analysis. Since then, numerous organizations have used it to inform their planning, programming, and policymaking. *A Portrait of Los Angeles County 2026* presents updated scores and analysis and assesses the County's progress toward meeting its well-being goals.

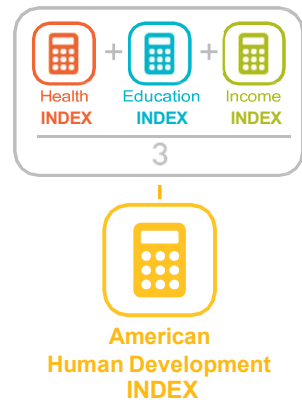
Numbers are important, but they can't tell the whole story. This report also incorporates input gathered from a diverse range of community members who shared their experiences, insights, and priorities. While the County has made great strides in some areas of well-being, it also faces urgent challenges: deadly wildfires, a skyrocketing cost of living, Immigration and Customs Enforcement raids, deep cuts to federal funding, and the ongoing impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Understanding who is flourishing and who is being left behind is a critical step to making sure that every Angeleno has what they need to thrive.

About the American Human Development Index

To understand how Angelenos are faring, Measure of America uses the American Human Development Index (HDI), a composite measure that takes into account three essential facets of a life of freedom and opportunity—a long and healthy life, access to knowledge, and a decent standard of living. The American HDI is based on the Human Development Index developed by the United Nations, the gold standard for measuring the well-being of people in every nation. To calculate HDI scores, Measure of America uses the latest official government data on health, measured by life expectancy at birth; education, measured by school enrollment and educational attainment; and earnings, measured by median personal earnings.

This report presents HDI scores for a deep dive into each of these areas individually—for 115 cities and unincorporated areas in LA County, as well as for the 34 community plan areas within the City of Los Angeles, for major racial and ethnic groups, for women and men, and for US- and foreign-born residents.

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American Human Development Index

The 2017 and 2026 *Portrait of Los Angeles County* reports used the latest data available, from 2015 and 2023, respectively. In the intervening years, **LA County's score on the American Human Development Index rose from 5.43 to 5.64.** This score represents a modest improvement but falls far short of the set goal of a 1.0-point increase. This score is slightly lower than that of the state as a whole, 5.82.

Women in Los Angeles County outscore men by roughly half a point-5.91 compared to 5.40-due to their higher scores on the health and education components of the index. Women have higher HDI scores than their male counterparts in all major racial and ethnic groups, although the size of the gap varies. Black women (5.33) and Black men (4.07) have the largest gender gap of the County's racial and ethnic groups. Women's overall HDI score has also improved more than men's score since 2015; it increased 7.8 percent, whereas men's score increased 4.4 percent.

A significant well-being gap separates US-born and foreign-born Angelenos. US-born LA County residents have a score of 6.06, and foreign-born residents have a score of 4.95. While foreign-born Angelenos enjoy a higher life expectancy, their significantly lower earnings and educational attainment drive down their HDI score.

Scores also vary widely by race and ethnicity. **Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islanders (NHOPI) in LA County have the lowest HDI score, 4.01.** NHOPI Angelenos are also the only group whose score decreased since 2015, down from 4.44. White residents saw the greatest improvement in well-being; their score increased 5.9 percent between 2015 and 2023. Of the County's six major racial and ethnic groups, **Asian residents have the highest HDI score, 7.68.** The County's Asian population is not a monolith, however, and Asians' well-being advantage becomes more complicated when broken down by subgroup: a vast gap separates the highest-scoring subgroup from the lowest-9.38 for Indian Angelenos to 4.76 for Cambodian Angelenos.

Even greater disparities come to light when HDI scores are broken down by place. **The highest HDI is found in Brentwood-Pacific Palisades,** which scores 9.58 out of 10 (these data predate the January 2025 Palisades Fire that devastated much of the area). **Southeast Los Angeles scores the lowest, 3.03.**

The "Five LA Counties"

The Five Los Angeles Counties framing sorts the cities, Census-designated places, and City of Los Angeles community plan areas featured in this report into "Five Los Angeles Counties" based on where they fall on the index. Doing so offers a way to understand what communities with similar HDI scores have in common in terms of their residents' day-to-day realities and opportunities.

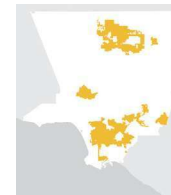
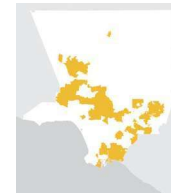
Glittering LA: Home to just 194,500 Angelenos (2 percent of the LA County population). Glittering LA communities have HDI scores of 9.0 or above. Glittering LA includes two City of Los Angeles neighborhoods, five cities that hug the Pacific Coast, and one city in the foothills of the Verdugo Mountains.

Elite Enclave LA: Encompassing 15 percent of the County population, or 1,461,700 Angelenos, Elite Enclave LA includes communities with scores between 7.0 and 8.99 on the HDI. The majority of the 32 locales that make up Elite Enclave LA are found on the outer edges of the County—from the South Bay, north along the coast to the Santa Monica Mountains, and east to the Verdugos and the San Gabriel Valley.

Main Street LA: The most populous and diverse of the Five LA Counties, Main Street LA is where most Angelenos call home. With HDI scores between 5.0 and 6.99, Main Street LA communities include suburban areas of the southern and eastern parts of the County and the Santa Clarita and San Fernando Valleys to the north, as well as LA City neighborhoods in the north part of the LA Basin.

Struggling LA: The second-most populous of the Five LAs, Struggling Los Angeles is home to 3,823,700 people, 39 percent of the County population. With scores between 3.0 and 4.99, Struggling LA communities have a lower level of well-being than LA County as a whole. Slightly over one-third of residents, 36.3 percent, are foreign-born, the largest share among the Five LAs.

Precarious LA: In the 2017 report, roughly 3 percent of the LA County population lived in communities that scored less than 3.0 on the HDI—Cudahy, Westmont, Lennox, East Rancho Dominguez, and Florence-Graham—plus one neighborhood in the City of Los Angeles, Southeast Los Angeles. Today no city, unincorporated area, or community plan area falls below 3.0 on the HDI.





A striking 15-year gap separates the longest- and shortest-living racial and ethnic groups.

Health

KEY FINDINGS: A LONG AND HEALTHY LIFE

The health component of the index is measured by average life expectancy at birth. Based on 2019-2023 mortality data, a baby born today in LA County can expect to live **80.5 years, on average**. While this is longer than the life expectancy of the average Californian or American, it is a **1.6-year decrease** since the 2017 report, which used 2010-2014 data. There are multiple reasons for this decline, including the COVID-19 pandemic and an increase in deaths from drug overdose and cardiovascular disease.

A striking 15-year gap separates the longest- and shortest-living racial and ethnic groups; **Asian** Angelenos have the highest life expectancy at **86.2 years**, while **Native Hawaiians and Other Pacific Islanders (NHOPI)** have the lowest, **71.2 years**. In terms of change over time, every racial and ethnic group experienced a decline in life expectancy since the 2017 report. White Angelenos saw the smallest decline, and Latino Angelenos the largest.

As in California and the United States as a whole, **women in LA County live longer than their male counterparts** across all major racial and ethnic groups. The average life expectancy at birth for women is 83.6 years, 6.1 years longer than for men. Asian women have the longest life expectancy of any gender/race combination, 88.6 years, while NHOPI men have the shortest, 65.9 years—a more-than-20-year difference.

Foreign-born LA County residents outlive those born in the United States by 3.6 years, but they also experienced a sharper life-expectancy decline since the 2010-2014 period—4.2 percent compared to 0.8 percent for US-born residents—in part due to the disparate impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Among the County's cities, Census-Designated Places, and City of Los Angeles Community Plan Areas, **life expectancy in the 2019-2023 period ranged from 88.1 years in Westwood to 71.8 years in Sun Village** in the Antelope Valley—a span of 16.3 years. The 10 places with the highest life expectancy, 85.6 years and up, are largely on the Westside and along the coast. The 10 with the lowest life expectancy, 76.9 years and less, are mostly in the Antelope Valley, the Gateway Cities region, and South Los Angeles.

Education

KEY FINDINGS: ACCESS TO KNOWLEDGE

Overall, LA County made considerable progress between 2015 and 2023 in terms of education. The Education Index, which combines data on enrollment and educational attainment, **increased by roughly 10 percent, from 4.96 to 5.46**. While enrollment remained stagnant, educational attainment saw a significant and heartening increase. Despite this progress, however, Los Angeles County is behind the state as a whole when it comes to high school diploma and bachelor's and graduate degree attainment.

On average, **LA County women have higher Education Index scores than men, 5.66 compared to 5.26**, outperforming men on both the school-enrollment and degree-attainment components of the index. Women's education scores have also improved at a faster clip since 2015—a 11.0 percent increase for women compared to a 9.1 percent increase for men.

The County's overall Education Index score conceals significant disparities between racial and ethnic groups. On the high end, **white Angelenos score highest, 7.62**, while Asian Angelenos are not far behind at 7.56. Black, Native American, NHOPI, and Latino Angelenos all have scores below the County average. **Latino Angelenos have the lowest score, 3.29**. One-third of Latino adults ages 25 and older lack a high school diploma, and the share of Latino adults with bachelor's degrees, 16.5 percent, is less than half the rate for the County as a whole, 36.6 percent. These gaps are a modern-day manifestation of past discrimination as well as present-day bias and differential access to resources.

Breaking scores down by place, communities in Los Angeles County have some of the highest Education Index scores in the country—as well as some of the lowest. The highest score, 9.91, can be found in Westwood, the City of Los Angeles neighborhood home to the University of California, Los Angeles. Maywood, a city in southeast Los Angeles, has the County's lowest Education Index score, 1.67.

The youth disconnection rate—the share of young people between the ages of 16 and 24 who are neither working nor in school—is an important marker for a community's overall well-being. Rates of youth disconnection in LA County vary widely by geography; **a 17-percentage-point difference separates the neighborhood clusters in Los Angeles with the highest and lowest disconnection rates**.



While enrollment remained flat, educational attainment saw a significant and heartening increase.



Latina women earn the least of all gender/race combinations, \$31,800, a shocking \$48,500 less than white men.

Earnings

KEY FINDINGS: A DECENT STANDARD OF LIVING

The typical LA worker in Los Angeles County earns about **\$44,600**, \$3,500 less than the California median, \$48,100. Median personal earnings have risen since the 2017 report, **from \$39,500 to \$44,600** (adjusted for inflation and presented in 2023 dollars). While earnings are higher, the costs of many bare-bones necessities, from housing and childcare to food and transportation, have outpaced the increase in earnings.

White workers in Los Angeles County earn \$70,200 per year, well above the countywide earnings figure and higher than any other racial or ethnic group. The next-highest-earning group, Asian Angelenos, still earn \$13,700 less than their white counterparts. **Latino** Angelenos earn the least, \$35,900.

- The differences are even more dramatic when gender is taken into account. **Overall, men in Los Angeles County take home \$9,300 more annually than their female counterparts**, \$49,700 compared to \$40,400, respectively. White workers have the largest gender earnings gap of all race/gender combinations: white men earn \$21,000 more than white women. Men outearn women in every racial and ethnic group except for Black Angelenos; Black women earn approximately \$600 per year more than Black men. **Latina women earn the least of all gender/race combinations, \$31,800, a shocking \$48,500 less than white men.**
- The 10 highest-earning places in the County are found on its outer edges, hugging the Pacific coast and ensconced in the foothills. The lowest-earning places, on the other hand, are largely at the center of the County, with the exception of Westwood, where the presence of UCLA students depresses median earnings (students tend to work many fewer hours than the typical worker). **In Palos Verdes Estates, the typical worker earns \$120,200, more than 2.5 times the Los Angeles County median and over four times the typical worker in Cudahy**, the lowest-earning place excluding Westwood.
- Housing cost burden is a severe issue in the County, affecting even those in wealthier neighborhoods. In fact, **in all LA County neighborhoods, a resident earning the median salary for that neighborhood would need to work over 40 hours a week** to afford monthly median housing costs without being housing cost-burdened. In 31 neighborhoods, a median-salary earner would need to work more than 80 hours per week, double the standard workweek.

Agenda for Action

TOWARD AN EQUITABLE FUTURE FOR ALL ANGELENOS

To address the disparities in education, health, and earnings pinpointed in this report, the Portrait of Los Angeles County 2026 Advisory Committees developed an agenda for action to help guide policymaking and programming to ensure that every Angeleno has the security and support they need to thrive. Informed by a series of community conversations, the agenda identifies three cross-cutting imperatives to tackle the county's greatest obstacles:

- **Address Disparities in Well-Being among Angelenos.** Well-being in Los Angeles County varies widely-by racial and ethnic background, gender, immigration status, sexual orientation, disability status, and housing circumstances. Policies and programs must address the striking gaps in life expectancy, median earnings, and educational outcomes between different demographic groups. Every LA County resident deserves the ability to lead a long, healthy, and freely chosen life of value, but as the data in this report show, this opportunity is not enjoyed equally. Targeted policies and programs that address the specific challenges to health, education, and earnings faced by different groups are key.
- **Prioritize Places Where the Well-Being of Children and Families Is at Risk.** The neighborhood in which you are born should not determine the caliber of your education, your chances for rewarding employment and financial security, or your ability to access basic necessities like healthy food, safe public spaces, and quality health care. Los Angeles County is home to a vast spectrum of well-being. Depending on where they live, LA County residents may enjoy an unparalleled level of resources, or they may struggle to make ends meet and access basic services. Investments and programming should be targeted toward the neighborhoods where children and families face the greatest obstacles to well-being and opportunity, especially those that fall into Struggling LA. Stakeholders can learn from the communities that have made the greatest strides in well-being since 2017.
- **Implement Prevention Programs and Services.** Many of the greatest hardships facing Angelenos, from unemployment and homelessness to chronic illness and climate-related disasters, are years in the making. The policies and programs put in place today-such as accessible mental health and substance abuse treatment, diversion programs, climate resilience strategies, and tenant protection and affordable housing-can help head off these challenges before they occur. The County has recently made great strides toward implementing and strengthening prevention efforts; this vital work must continue.

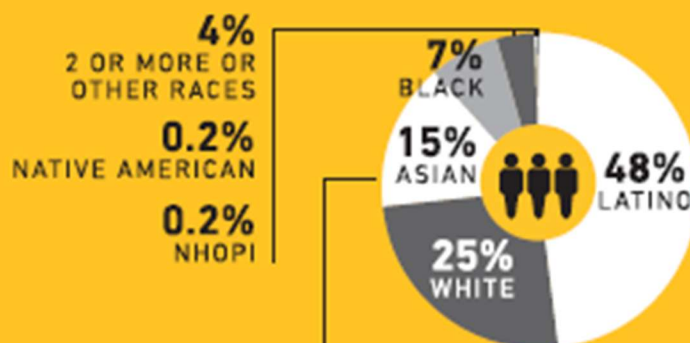
We need to address the inequality between wealthy and impoverished areas. I think we should have greater access to the resources that other, more privileged areas have. I believe all young people and children deserve the same opportunities and equal treatment.



Long Beach resident

Who Are We?

Los Angeles County Population



9%
LGBTQ
=
665,000
LGBTQ
ADULTS

12%
HAVE A
DISABILITY

ASIAN SUBGROUPS



LATINO SUBGROUPS



66%
US-BORN

34%
FOREIGN
BORN

Hello!
How are you?
24%
LIMITED ENGLISH
PROFICIENCY

52%
OF CHILDREN
HAVE AT LEAST ONE
IMMIGRANT PARENT