3. Community Profile

Los Angeles County is the most populous county in the United States, encompassing a diverse array of communities, landscapes, and infrastructure. According to the most recent census data, Los Angeles County has a population of approximately 10 million residents of which more than 1 million reside in unincorporated areas. The County's demographics, geographic features, and economic activities present both unique opportunities and significant challenges for hazard mitigation planning. This updated community profile integrates insights from the 2023 Operational Area Emergency Operations Plan (EOP) and reflects changes in population trends, infrastructure development, and climate risks.

The County Operational Area (OA) consists of all political subdivisions within the geographical boundaries of Los Angeles County. It encompasses five supervisorial districts, eight Disaster Management Areas (DMAs), 88 incorporated cities, 80 school districts, and approximately 142 special districts.

3.1 Geography and Land Use

Spanning over 4,000 square miles, Los Angeles County features diverse terrain, including coastal plains, valleys, mountains, islands, and deserts. The County's varied geography includes multiple microclimates that influence its exposure to natural hazards, such as earthquakes, tsunamis, wildfires, floods, and landslides. Urban areas, particularly the City of Los Angeles and its surrounding metropolitan region, are densely populated and heavily developed. In contrast, rural and unincorporated areas often face unique vulnerabilities due to limited infrastructure and resources. Rural areas include the Angeles and Los Padres National Forests, which have small communities, campgrounds, and day use areas. There are also two islands within the County, Santa Catalina and San Clemente. The County also includes a significant amount of Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) areas where residential and commercial development meets underdeveloped wildland with vegetative fuels. Land use within the County is equally diverse, with a mix of residential, commercial, industrial, agricultural, and open spaces. Recent urban development in densely populated areas has increased impervious surfaces like concrete and asphalt, which retain heat and create urban heat islands (UHI) that are much hotter than nearby rural areas. This phenomenon elevates temperatures, especially in low-income communities lacking green spaces for cooling. Additionally,

urbanization affects stormwater management by reducing natural drainage and exacerbating flooding risks in low-lying areas.

These trends underscore the need for sustainable planning strategies, such as promoting green infrastructure, enhancing stormwater systems, and mitigating heat islands through tree planting and reflective materials. The County's diverse land use must be carefully managed to reduce vulnerabilities while supporting economic growth and environmental sustainability.
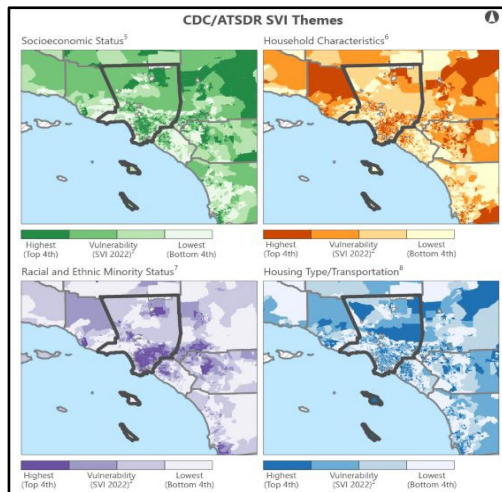
3.2 Social Vulnerability

Figure 1 CDC Social Vulnerability Index

Social vulnerability is a crucial component to Los Angeles County's hazard mitigation planning. The County is home to a diverse population with disparities in income, housing stability, and access to resources. The Los Angeles County Anti-Racism, Diversity, and Inclusion (ARDI) Initiative created a comprehensive Equity Explorer, which is a geospatial tool that explores multiple equity data points across Los Angeles County. The ARDI Equity Explorer includes various layers that visualize social equity, economic opportunity, housing and homelessness, health, justice, built environment, and disaster recovery data. The public can access this data at ceo.lacounty.gov/ardi/tools. Maps created using data from the ARDI Equity Explorer are in Appendix XX.

The US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) defines social vulnerability as a community's capacity to prepare for and respond to the stress of hazardous events ranging from natural disasters to human caused threats. The CDC's Social Vulnerability Index is designed to identify and quantify communities experiencing social vulnerability.

The most recent CDC Social Vulnerability Index score from 2022 for Los Angeles County indicated a high level of vulnerability across four themes: socioeconomic status, household characteristics, racial and ethnic minority status, and housing type/transportation.

Vulnerable populations identified for Los Angeles County that will be considered in the AHMP include:

- **Low-Income Residents**: Individuals living below or near the poverty line are often disproportionately affected by disasters due to limited financial resources for emergency preparedness, response, and recovery.

- **People with Access and Functional Needs (AFN)**: Individuals with Access and Functional needs have increased challenges in preparedness, evacuation, sheltering, accessing emergency services and recovery. Access and Functional Needs include but are not limited to people who have any combination in varying degree of: physical disabilities, intellectual disabilities, developmental disabilities, mental health-related issues, visual impairments, hearing impairments/deaf, mobility impairments, or chronic conditions. AFN also include older adults, infants and children, people living in
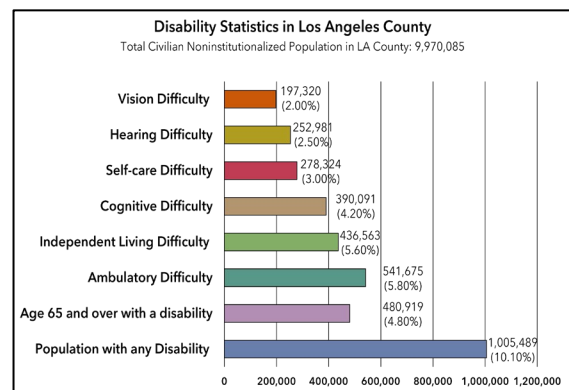

Figure 2 Disability Statistics in Los Angeles County

institutionalized settings, people living below the poverty line or experiencing homelessness, people with limited English proficiency or are non-English speakers, or people who are transportation disadvantaged.

- **People Experiencing Homelessness (PEH)**: With an estimated over 75,000 individuals experiencing homelessness, this population is particularly at risk during extreme weather events and other disasters.

- **Immigration Status**: Fear of engaging with government services based on immigration status can prevent residents from accessing critical resources.

- **Limited English Proficiency:** Over 40% of residents speak a language other than English at home, highlighting the need for multilingual and culturally appropriate outreach efforts. Language accessibility is critical to ensure all residents and visitors can obtain information and services during a disaster. See Figure 4 for a breakdown of languages spoken at home in Los Angeles County not including American Sign Language.
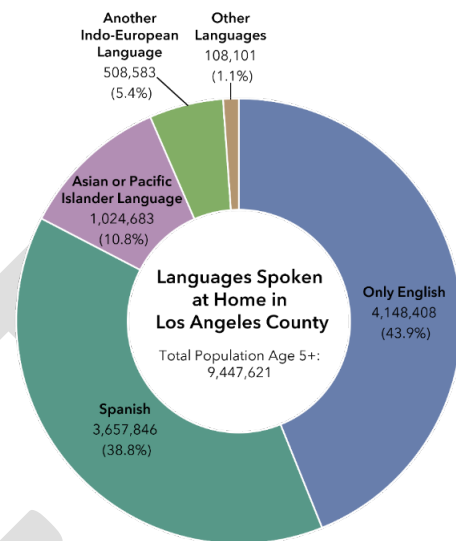

Figure 3 Breakdown of Language at Home in Los Angeles County

The figure below highlights certain variables in Los Angeles County that may increase vulnerability to emergencies and disasters. To address these vulnerabilities, the County's mitigation planning includes equitable strategies designed to reduce risk and enhance resilience among these populations. Targeted outreach, improved access to resources, preparedness education events, and collaboration with community organizations are integral to these efforts.

Figure 4 Los Angeles County Vulnerability Variables
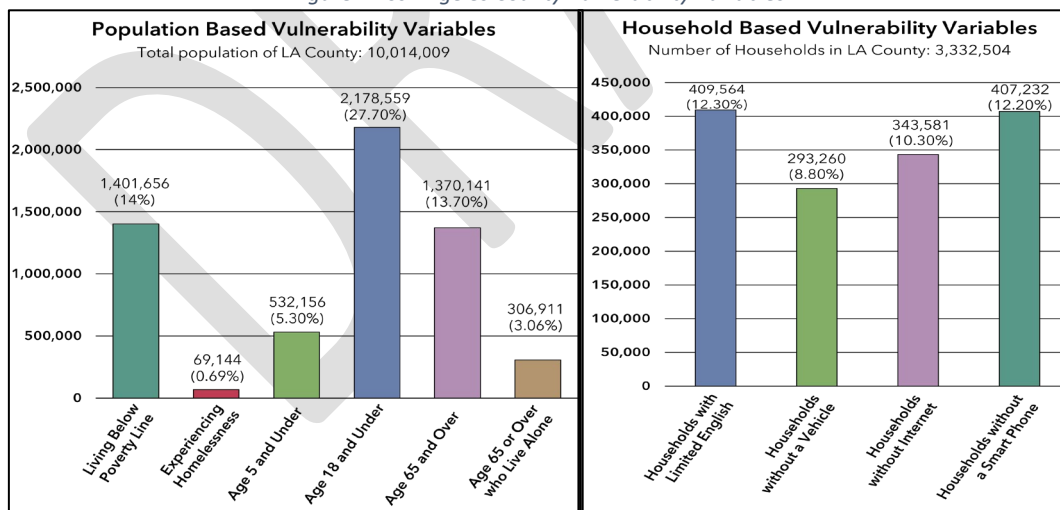
The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) maintains the National Risk Index, a mapping tool that assesses 18 possible hazards a jurisdiction is susceptible to in combination with the amount of loss that could result from those hazards. Los Angeles County ranks as the community with the most risk in the United States according to the FEMA National Risk Index. According to the National Risk Index, hazards

with the highest risk for Los Angeles County include earthquake, wildfires, extreme heat, flooding, high winds, and landslides.
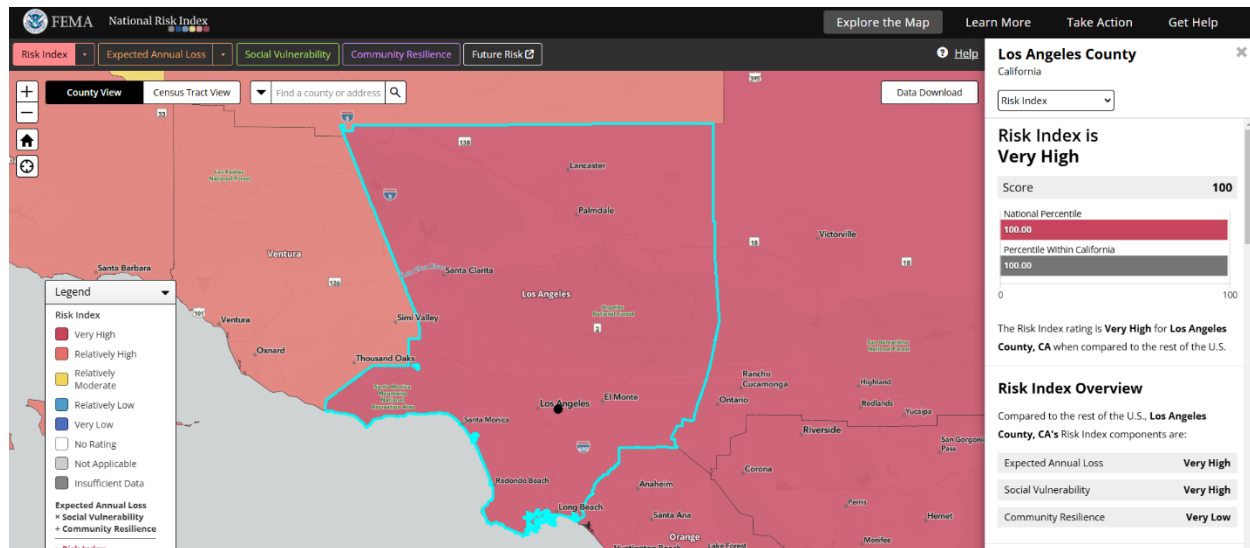

Figure 5 FEMA National Risk Index

3.3 Economy and Critical Infrastructure

Los Angeles County is a global economic hub, hosting industries such as entertainment, technology, manufacturing, and international trade. The Port of Los Angeles and the Port of Long Beach collectively form one of the world's busiest trade gateways, underscoring the importance of protecting critical infrastructure from hazards including those exacerbated by climate change. Critical facilities provide services and functions essential to a community, especially during and after a disaster. Common types of critical facilities include but are not limited to fire stations, police stations, hospitals, schools, and utilities. Critical facilities may also include places that can be used for sheltering, cooling centers, staging purposes, or other large public gathering spots such as community centers and libraries. Critical facilities include those operated by non-governmental and business partners vital for redevelopment or economic security. When these are affected by a disaster, the County provides businesses and workers impacted by the disaster with vital information and resources. This allows them to maneuver effectively through disaster response toward recovery using its network of job centers and business hubs.

Other critical infrastructure includes the facilities and industries that enable all facets of society to function, including but not limited to the following community lifelines:

- **Safety and Security**: The myriad of local law enforcement, fire and rescue, emergency management, schools, and other government services that maintain public safety and security.

- **Communications:** The interconnected network of infrastructure owners and operators of communications systems such as internet, telephone, cellular and other communications towers, cable, satellite, and more.

- **Transportation Networks**: The County's extensive network of roadways, highways, railways, transit systems, and airports is essential for daily operations and disaster response.

- **Energy Systems**: Power generation facilities, energy distribution networks, and pipelines are vulnerable to multiple types of hazards and threats.

- **Water and Wastewater Systems**: Drought conditions and aging infrastructure pose risks to water availability and quality.

- **Healthcare Facilities**: Over 100 hospitals and numerous clinics serve the County, requiring robust contingency plans to maintain operations during disasters.

- **Food and Shelter:** The vast system of food production (i.e., agriculture), distribution, and retail along with community housing or sheltering.

For the 2025 AHMP, ### major Los Angeles County-owned and Los Angeles County-related critical facilities were identified from various Los Angeles County department and agencies.

3.4 Climate and Environmental Conditions

Los Angeles County faces escalating risks from climate change, significantly impacting its environment, economy, and communities. These challenges include rising temperatures, prolonged droughts, more frequent and severe extreme weather events, and their cascading effects. These risks highlight the critical need for adaptive planning to protect vulnerable populations, infrastructure, and natural resources. Key climate-related considerations referenced in the Los Angeles County Climate Action Plan that will be addressed in this AHMP include, but are not limited to:

- **Extreme Weather Events**: Extreme temperatures in the Los Angeles region are expected to increase. Both dry and wet extremes are projected to intensify, leading to longer dry periods than historically experienced. These dry periods are expected to be followed by significantly wetter conditions, including atmospheric rivers bringing more intense rainfall. This pattern may result in increased water scarcity, mudslides, and flooding.

- **Sea-Level Rise**: Coastal communities are at heightened risk of flooding and erosion, threatening homes, businesses, and critical infrastructure. Sea level rise can exacerbate the impacts of high tides, storm surges, and heavy precipitation, and can lead to increased coastal flooding and shoreline erosion.

- **Increasing Wildfire Risk**: Climate change has intensified wildfire seasons, particularly in the County's mountainous, wildland urban interface (WUI), and new and undeveloped regions. Wildfires are projected to increase in frequency and intensity including in some areas not historically impacted by wildfire.

In response, the County has prioritized integrating climate adaptation strategies into its hazard mitigation planning, as outlined in the Climate Vulnerability Assessment and the EOP.

3.5 Regional Collaboration and Planning Efforts

Los Angeles County's size and complexity necessitates collaboration with numerous jurisdictions, agencies, and community organizations. The County is designated as the Operational Area Coordinator and functions as an intermediate level in the State of California's Standardized Emergency Management System (SEMS). In accordance with SEMS, the County serves as the communications and coordination link between local governments within Los Angeles County and the state government. Partnerships with academic institutions, non-profits, and private sector stakeholders support data collection, public engagement, and innovative mitigation strategies. Additionally, the County has also adopted Emergency Support Functions (ESFs) as the primary emergency management coordination structure. ESFs group function-specific stakeholders who will coordinate throughout all phases of emergency management,

including function-specific mitigation activities. For more information on regional emergency management collaboration and planning, reference the EOP.

3.6 Implications for Hazard Mitigation Planning

Understanding the community is a critical aspect in hazard mitigation planning. This community profile will inform key considerations in subsequent sections of the AHMP including but not limited to the following:

- **Targeted Outreach**: Include vulnerable populations and the business community in the planning process through equitable public outreach.

- **Infrastructure Resilience**: Prioritize the protection of critical infrastructure, including ports and transportation networks, energy systems, and water and wastewater systems, among others.

- **Climate Adaptation**: Develop strategies to mitigate the impacts of climate change, focusing on urban heat islands, sea-level rise, and wildfire risks.

- **Regional Coordination**: Strengthen direct collaboration within the OA between the County, local jurisdictions, special districts, unified school districts, the business community and cross-sector non-governmental partners to enhance awareness, preparedness, and response capabilities.

- **Transparent & Open Communication:** Ensure communications are accessible, and clear to advance public trust and safety. Develop dashboards to demonstrate progress.