

## About ACTION for Healthy Communities

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ACTION for Healthy Communities is a collaborative of individual agencies and public and private organizations committed to improving the overall quality of life in San Luis Obispo County. A list of those organizations is found in the Introduction to this report. ACTION completed its first benchmark study of community issues in 1999. This report represents the group's fifth report and provides valuable comparative results in a number of criteria that measure local community health and well-being.

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This and prior reports may be downloaded for free at United Way of San Luis Obispo County's web site, under Our Community, [www.unitedwayslo.org](http://www.unitedwayslo.org).

## About the Researcher

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Applied Survey Research (ASR) is a nonprofit, social research firm dedicated to

helping people build better communities by collecting meaningful data, facilitating information-based planning and developing custom strategies. The firm was founded on the principle that community improvement, sustainability, and program success are closely tied to assessment of needs, evaluation of community goals, and the development of appropriate responses.

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# Snapshot of San Luis Obispo

Section	Indicator	Measurement	Data	Year	Trend	Direction	Page
<b>Basic Needs</b>	Basic Needs	Percent of telephone survey respondents who found themselves going without basic needs in the past year	12.0%	2010	↑		9
	Housing Affordability	Percentage of telephone survey respondents who used more than one half of their income to pay for housing	22.8%	2010	↑		16
<b>Education Issues</b>	Parent Involvement in Schools	Percent of parent telephone survey respondents who attend special events - assemblies, open house, parent conferences three or more times a year	78.0%	2010	—		29
	Test Scores	Percent of 3 <sup>rd</sup> grade students scoring proficient or above in the English-Language Arts subject area on the California Standards Test	54.0%	2009	↑		36
	High School Dropout Rates	Adjusted four-year derived dropout rate	11.1%	2007-2008	↓		50
<b>Economic Issues</b>	Economic Well-Being	Percent of telephone survey respondents who felt they were financially better off this year than last year	28.0%	2010	↓		59
	Annual Average Unemployment	Unemployment Rate	9.0%	2009	↑		68
<b>Health Issues</b>	Health Insurance	Percent of telephone survey respondents who have health insurance	83.7%	2010	↓		108
	Obesity	Percent of overweight or obese adults	49.1%	2007	↓		125
<b>Physical Environment Issues</b>	Physical Environment Concerns	Percent of telephone survey respondents who said they were “very concerned” about their water quality	43.1%	2010	—		159
	Parks	Percent of telephone survey respondents visiting any outdoor recreation locations in San Luis Obispo County at least 11 times over the past 3 months	39.4%	2010	↑		169
<b>Public Safety Issues</b>	Neighborhood Safety	Percent of telephone survey respondents that feel very safe in their neighborhood	79.9%	2010	↓		187
	Crime Rate for Selected Areas	Crime Rate ( <i>per 1,000 residents</i> )	25.0	2009	↓		194
<b>Social Environment Issues</b>	Giving and Volunteering	Percent of telephone survey respondents who have contributed money or other property to any charitable organization in the past year	82.3%	2010	—		230
	Rating of County Government	Percent of telephone survey respondents who rated San Luis Obispo County government as “Excellent” or “Very good”	31.2%	2010	—		234

See the Legend on page xi for an explanation of the Trend and Direction Icons.

# 2010 Highlights

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## Our Population

- The population of San Luis Obispo County was approximately 273,200 in January 2010. The largest jurisdiction in the county was San Luis Obsipo City, making up 17% of the population.
- The majority of residents (71%) were white, about one-fifth (22%) were Hispanic, 3% were Asian, and the rest were other races/ethnicities. In 2008, 83% of the population 5 years and over spoke English only at home, and 14% spoke Spanish only at home.
- Seventy-eight percent of family households are married-couple families, and the average family size is three persons.

## Our Basic Needs

- Twelve percent of ACTION telephone survey respondents said that they went without some basic needs in the last year, with the most common shortfalls being health care and food.

### Food

- Thirty-four percent of school aged-children in San Luis Obispo County were enrolled in the Free and Reduced Price Meal Program during the 2008-2009 school year.
- Nearly 29% of county residents were not able to afford enough food in 2007.



### Housing

- The median sale price of homes in the San Luis Obispo area were \$350,000 in 2010, down from \$533,000 in 2006.
- The average cost for a two bedroom rental was \$978 per month in 2006 and that increased by 26% to \$1,230 a month in 2010.
- Almost one-quarter of ACTION telephone survey respondents spent more than one-half of their income to pay for housing costs.
- In 2009, there were approximately 2,840 homeless in San Luis Obispo County, almost one-third of whom had children.

## Our Education

### Parent Involvement

- Seventy-eight percent of parents in the telephone survey said they attended special events, assemblies, open houses and parent conferences for their child three or more times a year.
- Over 60% of San Luis Obispo family members said they read stories or looked at picture books every day of the week with their children under 12 years old.

## School Enrollment

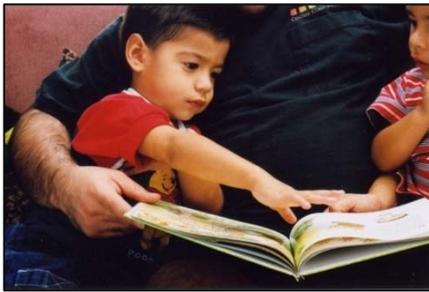
- In San Luis Obispo County, there were 34,707 students enrolled in the 2008-2009 school year, a 5% decline from the 2004-2005 school year.

## Test Scores

- More 3<sup>rd</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, and 7<sup>th</sup> grade students scored proficient or above in the English-Language Arts and Math sections on the California Standard Tests (STAR) in 2010 compared to 2005. However, 9<sup>th</sup> grade students have seen fewer improvements.
- From 2005, the percentage of San Luis Obispo County students who passed the California High School Exit Exam has been high (from 84% to 89%) and remained higher than the state overall (from 74% to 81%).

## Success in Schools

- The truancy rate for San Luis Obispo County students has gotten worse since 2004-2005 and was consistently worse than the state of California. In 2008-2009, 29% of students had unexcused absences or were tardy on 3 or more days in San Luis Obispo County, compared to 24% of students in California overall.
- There has been a nearly 50% increase in expulsions and a 71% increase in suspensions for San Luis Obispo County students between 2004-2005 and 2008-2009.



- The four-year dropout rate for San Luis Obispo students in 2007-2008 was 11%, down from 14% in 2006-2007. The overall graduation rate for San Luis Obispo county was 88% in 2007-2008.
- The percent of high school graduates with UC/CSU required courses completed ranged from a low of 0% in Coast Unified School Districts, to a high of 46% in Templeton Unified and 48% for San Luis Coastal Unified in 2007-2008.

## Our Economy

- ACTION telephone survey respondents said the most important issue facing the county over the next few years is employment/jobs.
- Almost half (48%) of ACTION telephone survey respondents said they felt economically worse off this year as compared to last year.

## Jobs and Earnings

- Median family income in the county was slightly higher at \$72,500 than California at \$71,000 in 2010, and both were higher than the United States average of \$64,400.
- From 2003 to 2009 there was about a 20% increase in households (for all family sizes) living in poverty.
- The annual average unemployment rate increased from 6% in 2008 to 9% in 2009.
- There was a loss of 5,200 jobs in the county from 107,400 in 2008 to 102,200 jobs in 2009.



# Our Health

## Insurance

- Eighty-four percent of ACTION telephone survey respondents said they had health insurance and 85% said they had a regular source of health care.
- Health insurance coverage has declined, 84% of ACTION telephone survey respondents said they had insurance 2010 compared to 89% in 2006.
- Health care cost affected access to health insurance for an increasing number of ACTION telephone survey respondents. Of those who didn't have health insurance in 2006, just over half said it was due to cost (60%) while in 2010, 73% said it was due to cost.
- Fifty-three percent of Spanish-speaking parents (face-to-face survey respondents) were uninsured in 2010.



## Exercise and Nutrition

- Only one-third of San Luis Obispo County teens self-reported getting the daily recommendation of five or more fruits and vegetables in 2007.
- The Healthy People 2010 guidelines advise that adults get at least 30 minutes of exercise a day for five days a week or more. In 2010, 48% of ACTION telephone survey respondents achieved that goal, down from 57% in 2003.
- Almost one-half (49%) of San Luis Obispo County adults were considered overweight or obese in 2007.

## Mortality

- The death rates from chronic preventable diseases such as heart disease, lung cancer, stroke, and diabetes decreased between 2000 and 2008.
- The leading cause of death for San Luis Obispo County residents was cancer, followed by heart disease (based on age-adjusted death rate averaged over three years: 2006-2008).
- San Luis Obispo County ranked 16<sup>th</sup> highest in infant mortality rates statewide (2005-2007).

## Substance Abuse

- San Luis Obispo County 11<sup>th</sup> graders' used marijuana and alcohol at consistently higher rates than California 11<sup>th</sup> graders from 2003-04 to 2007-2008; however, in 2010 only 36% of ACTION telephone survey respondents believed that alcohol and drug abuse problems were "very serious" at their child's high school.



- Slightly more San Luis Obispo County ACTION telephone survey respondents were smoking this year, up from 11.7% of residents saying they smoked in 2006 to 13.1% in 2010.
- Fewer smokers were smoking indoors in the presence of non-smokers. In 2006, 67% of ACTION telephone survey respondents said there were non-smokers present in a house when people were smoking, and that declined to 31% in 2010.
- The percent of county residents who were binge drinking in the last year was higher (34%) than the state of California (30%) in 2007.

# Our Physical Environment

## The Outdoors

- Thirty-six percent of San Luis Obispo County gross acreage was protected by contract under the Williamson Act.<sup>1</sup> Forty-one percent of the land is protected by both contract and easement.<sup>2</sup>
- About half of San Luis Obispo County residents lived one half-mile or less from the nearest park or trail, increasing their ease of access to exercise and activity outdoors.
- In the last three months, half of ACTION telephone survey respondents visited outdoor recreation sites between 1 and 10 times and almost 40% went more than 11 times.



## Pollution

- Particulate matter of less than ten microns has exceeded the state 24-hour standard on numerous occasions in the past several years throughout South County, and it exceeded the annual standard of 20 ug/m3.
- Ninety-seven percent of the inspections of small water systems met state water quality safety standards in 2008-2009.
- There was an 8% increase from 2001 to 2008 in the number of vehicle miles traveled daily by San Luis Obispo County residents.

# Our Public Safety

## Crime

- Eighty percent of ACTION telephone survey respondents felt very safe in their neighborhood, and an increasing percent of students felt safe in school.



- The crime rate in 2009 was 25.0 per 1,000 residents, a decrease from 28.5 per 1,000 residents back in 2001. Juvenile arrest rates for misdemeanors per 1,000 youth have also decreased since 2001.
- The number of Domestic Violence (DV) calls dropped 32% from 2001 to 2009, and the number of DV cases with weapons dropped 48%.

<sup>1</sup> The California Land Conservation Act of 1965—commonly referred to as the Williamson Act—enables local governments to enter into contracts with private landowners for the purpose of restricting specific parcels of land to agricultural or related open space use. In return, landowners receive property tax assessments which are much lower than normal because they are based upon farming and open space uses as opposed to full market value. Local governments receive an annual subvention of forgone property tax revenues from the state via the Open Space Subvention Act of 1971.

<sup>2</sup> Cities and counties may accept or purchase easements from private landowners for open space and resource conservation purposes. Open space and conservation easements are, in effect, purchases of development rights. The deed transferring an easement to a local government must restrict the transferred property's use to open space or resource conservation activities.

# Our Social Environment

## Community Concerns

- The top concern of ACTION telephone survey respondents was housing costs and homelessness.
- About one-third of respondents were very concerned about racism in their community.
- There were a total of 13 hate crime offenses in 2009.

## Community information

- Most ACTION telephone survey respondents were getting their community information from newspapers, cable news programs or TV, and the internet; fewer were obtaining it from the radio.



## Giving

- Over 82% of ACTION telephone survey respondents donated to charities in 2009.
- There was an increase in the percentage of ACTION telephone survey respondents who volunteered in the past month from 34% in 2006 to 45% in 2010.

## Voting

- More San Luis Obispo County registered voters have been casting their vote in recent presidential elections, up from 77% in 2000, to 80% in 2004, to 83% in 2008.

## Project Overview

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What is the quality of life like in San Luis Obispo County? Do residents feel safe? Are there enough employment opportunities? Do people feel they have access to good schools and services? Is our community healthy?

These are just a few of the questions that a consortium of public and private health, education, business, environmental, human service and civic organizations set out to answer when they began the ACTION for Healthy Communities project in the late 1990's. As defined, the project goals are:

- Raise public awareness of human needs, changing trends, emerging issues and community problems;
- Provide accurate, credible and valid information on an ongoing basis to human services planners and those providing funds;
- Provide information for individual institutions to guide decision-making about creation, management, and redesign of programs;
- Establish community goals using measurable Quality-of-Life Indicators that will lead to positive, healthy development for individuals, families and communities;
- Develop and support collaborative action plans to achieve the community goals.

The first wave of data collection occurred in 1999. The project was updated in 2001, 2003, 2006, and this 2010 survey represents the fifth report, in which many of the measures have been examined for trends, and some new indicators have been added.

ACTION for Healthy Communities will provide survey results and data to the community through this Comprehensive Report and a separate Indicators Report. To download additional free copies of these reports, please visit United Way of San Luis Obispo County's web site, under Our Community, [www.unitedwayslo.org](http://www.unitedwayslo.org).

For further information contact: ACTION for Healthy Communities c/o San Luis Obispo County Community Foundation, P.O. Box 1580, San Luis Obispo, CA 93406 Voice: 805-543-2323 Fax: 805-543-2346.

## Introduction

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ACTION for Healthy Communities believes that by sharing resources and working together, more comprehensive and useful planning tools can be developed. ACTION also believes that a more comprehensive approach to assessing the quality of life in San Luis Obispo County will enable organizations that allocate resources to more effectively address critical community concerns.

In 2003, the UCSB Economic Forecast Project conducted the assessment for San Luis Obispo County. Applied Survey Research was selected to update and conduct the 2010 assessment and survey.

This Comprehensive Report is considered the first step in a comprehensive planning process.

ACTION celebrates the collaborative spirit of all individuals and organizations involved with this ongoing effort. We especially thank our financial sponsors for their support, encouragement and faith in the process.

## Mission and Guiding Principles

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The mission of ACTION is to “develop a comprehensive planning approach to identify and address community needs through collaborative efforts with community partners to implement effective programs that improve community health and well being.”

ACTION has adopted these guiding principles:

- Long-term approach to planning and program development;
- Creation of a collaborative planning mechanism;
- Commitment to a community-driven process with consumer empowerment;
- Assessment should result in identification of priorities and action plans.

## Desired Outcomes

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ACTION has developed the following desired outcomes for this community assessment:

To study the community health and services that exist in order to:

1. Provide accurate, credible, and valid information on an ongoing basis to health and human service planners, policy-makers, and funders concerning the creation, management and support of programs.
2. Encourage collaboration and partnerships to facilitate improved service delivery that is

coordinated, holistic and consolidated within the community.

3. Set Community Indicators that can serve as the basis for the formulation of Community Goals that will lead to a community-wide vision and plan for improving community health.
4. Re-assess key indicators every three years to track progress and to identify emerging gaps and resources so that strategies for responding to the gaps can be developed.

# The Community Assessment Process Overview

This community assessment model provides a comprehensive view of the quality of life in San Luis Obispo County. It is based on primary (public opinion) data and secondary (empirical trend) data

that are gathered for a series of indicators in seven areas: basic needs, education, the economy, health, physical environment, public safety, and social environment.

## Data Report

Every three years, the primary and secondary data will be compiled into a Comprehensive Report. (Please see Appendix A for methodology). The intent of this report is to provide an in-depth look at the quality of life in San Luis Obispo County.

Ethnicity, income, senior, and geographic breakdowns have been incorporated into many of the primary data items as well. Please refer to the legend for explanations of frequently used symbols and notations throughout the report.

## Legend

Item	Description
<b>North Coast</b>	Baywood, Cambria, Cayucos, Harmony, Los Osos, Morro Bay, San Simeon
<b>North County</b>	Atascadero, Bee Rock, California Valley, Camp Roberts, Cholame, Creston, Lake Nacimiento, Paso Robles, Pozo, Klau, San Miguel, Santa Margarita, Shandon, Templeton
<b>San Luis Obispo</b>	City of San Luis Obispo, Avila Beach
<b>South County</b>	Arroyo Grande, Halcyon, Grover Beach, Nipomo, Oceano, Pismo Beach, Shell Beach
	Denotes a telephone survey question.
	Indicates data from the California Health Interview Survey (CHIS).
	Denotes a face-to-face survey question.
	Indicates data moving in an upward direction over time.
	Indicates data moving in a downward direction over time.
	Indicates data remaining constant over time or no trend data available.
	Indicates data with a combination of both challenges and successes.
	Indicates data moving in a negative direction.
	Indicates data moving in a positive direction.

## Suggested Uses of this Report

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The tips shown below are offered to make the report easier to use.

### **For a Broad Overview of Quality of Life Issues:**

It is best to review the first page of each of the seven sections of the San Luis Obispo County report: basic needs, education, the economy, health, physical environment, public safety, and social environment. Each of these sections begins with a summary of the research area.

### **For Information about Trends that May Impact Your Business or Organization:**

Within each of the seven research areas, there is a wealth of information on a wide range of issues. One of the most useful features of this report is the display of trend data, where it is available. A tremendous amount of detailed information can be found that may help identify new customers or emerging needs, or explain changes in the local environment that will have future impacts. In selected areas, demographic breakdowns of data, most commonly by ethnicity, income, seniors or geographic areas have been included.

### **For Data to Support or Refine Your Services and Products:**

This information is intended to be used in your own reports and proposals, and as a baseline for performance systems. Whenever report data is used, ACTION should be acknowledged. ACTION representatives are available to speak with groups about the information in this report.

### **Supplementary Reports Available**

In addition to this Comprehensive Report, several issue folios have been developed which highlight and provide analysis of key Quality of Life Indicators. Separate detailed computer tabulations of the 2010 telephone survey and Target Group surveys are available. To download additional free copies of these reports, please visit United Way of San Luis Obispo County's web site, under Our Community, [www.unitedwayslo.org](http://www.unitedwayslo.org).

For further information contact: ACTION for Healthy Communities c/o San Luis Obispo County Community Foundation, P.O. Box 1580, San Luis Obispo, CA 93406 Voice: 805-543-2323 Fax: 805-543-2346.

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## Major Financial Sponsors

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County of San Luis Obispo:

Administrative Office

Probation Department

Health Agency

Community Action Partnership of SLO County

First 5 Children & Families Commission of San Luis Obispo County

San Luis Obispo Council of Governments

San Luis Obispo County Community Foundation

## Supporting Financial Sponsors

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Air Pollution Control District

Area Agency on Aging

ARTS Obispo

Children's Services Network

French Hospital Medical Center

People's Self Help Housing Corporation

San Luis Obispo County Housing Trust Fund

San Luis Obispo County Office of Education

San Luis Obispo Housing Authority

San Luis Obispo Nonprofit Housing Corporation

San Luis Obispo Symphony

Sierra Vista Regional Medical Center

The LINK

Transitions-Mental Health Association

United Way of San Luis Obispo County

Workforce Investment Board

## Collaborative Partners

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Adult Services Policy Council  
AIDS Support Network  
Air Pollution Control District  
Area Agency on Aging  
Arroyo Grande Community Hospital  
ARTS Obispo  
Boys & Girls Club of South San Luis Obispo  
County  
Caring Callers  
Children's Services Network  
Commission on the Status of Women  
Community Action Partnership of SLO County  
Community Health Centers of the Central Coast  
County of San Luis Obispo:  
Department of Social Services  
Health Agency  
County Medical Services Program  
Drug & Alcohol Services  
Mental Health Services  
Public Health Services  
Public Guardian  
Public Library  
Planning and Building Department  
Probation Department  
Economic Vitality Corporation  
Environmental Center of San Luis Obispo  
First 5 Children & Families Commission of San  
Luis Obispo County  
French Hospital Medical Center  
Habitat for Humanity of San Luis Obispo County  
In-Home Supportive Services  
Latino Outreach Council  
LifeSteps Foundation  
Long Term Care Ombudsman  
People's Self Help Housing Corporation  
Prado Day Center  
San Luis Obispo Chamber of Commerce  
San Luis Obispo Childcare Planning Council  
San Luis Obispo Council of Governments  
San Luis Obispo County American Red Cross  
San Luis Obispo County Community Foundation  
San Luis Obispo County Health Commission  
San Luis Obispo County Housing Trust Fund  
San Luis Obispo County Medical Association  
San Luis Obispo County Office of Education  
San Luis Obispo County HIV Prevention,  
Advocacy and CARE Consortium  
San Luis Obispo County YMCA  
San Luis Obispo Housing Authority  
San Luis Obispo Nonprofit Housing Corporation  
San Luis Obispo Symphony  
Senior Legal Services  
Senior Peer Counseling  
Sierra Vista Regional Medical Center  
The LINK  
Transitions-Mental Health Association  
United Way of San Luis Obispo County  
Victim Witness  
Workforce Investment Board

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